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# A Phenomenological Study of College Seniors in a Performing Arts Music Program

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A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF COLLEGE SENIORS IN A PERFORMING  
ARTS MUSIC PROGRAM

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Graduate School of  
Clemson University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Educational Leadership

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By  
Eric James Lapin  
December 2013

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Accepted by:  
Dr. Russ Marion, Committee Chair  
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Dr. James Satterfield

## ABSTRACT

Music has been an integral component of higher education dating back to the Middle Ages. As higher education developed in American institutions a traditional degree program began to emerge. Students in American higher education music programs focused on either performance or music education. However, a review of the literature has shown that these traditional programs are rife with limitations, and in many cases are not properly preparing students. As a result, Performing Arts style undergraduate degree programs are gaining popularity. These Performing Arts programs seek to offer a more comprehensive music and arts experience that more adequately prepares graduates for careers in fields other than performance or teaching. Much of the literature concerning these new types of programs is focused on either theatre or technology. To begin to fill this gap in the literature, this study focused on one primary research question: How do senior, undergraduate students in the Clemson University Performing Arts music major describe their lived experiences in the program?

As a phenomenological study, this study utilized the methodological structure of van Manen (1990). Chosen through purposive sampling, five senior music students from the Performing Arts music program at Clemson University served as the research participants. While the primary data source was in-depth interviews, observation and document analysis were also used. The interview data was analyzed using both a holistic and line-by-line approach. Through this process the themes of Expectations, College Choice, “It’s Kind of Like Pros and Cons,” Opportunities, and Results emerged as

essential themes. A data display was used to illustrate the relationship between these themes.

While many limitations, issues, and difficulties remained, this study found that this Performing Arts music program had largely succeeded. The senior participants felt prepared for a life in the arts in terms of skills, connections, and marketability. Lastly, this study offered recommendations for practice and future research that could serve to help preserve the essential role of music as a discipline in higher education.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all of my family and friends that have supported me along the way. Firstly, my parents have always served as two of my biggest supporters. By reading to me as a child, attending concerts, and always offering an encouraging word, you both made this work possible. Mom, I will never forget that I was not born under your heart, but in it. Dad, while I can't make up for causing you to miss the 1982 Orange Bowl, I figure that a Clemson degree is a start! I love you both very much.

In addition, my sisters, Amy and Kara have always served to both challenge and inspire me as siblings and as friends. The dedication to work and family that you each possess serves as a point of pride. Your examples, ideas, dedication, and encouragement helped to make this work a reality.

Lastly, this work could not have been possible without my wife, Leigh. You challenge me with your desire for me to reach my full potential, you inspire me with your creativity and dedication to learning, and you support me in all aspects of our life. This degree is as much yours as it is mine.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Throughout its history, the role of music in higher education has constantly changed. As the needs of the American academy and the demands of society developed, so too did the role of music. Throughout this process, music has served many purposes and has been viewed in many different ways. At varying points, music has been a means of gaining valuable scientific thinking skills, a means of conveying religion, a form of entertainment, and a skill to obtain meaningful employment (Britton, 1982; Haskins, 2001; Janin, 2008; Thwing, 1897; Veysey, 1965; White & Heller, 1983). In modern times, music in American higher education has become narrowly focused on either music performance or music education. These Bachelor of Music degree tracks were initially designed to prepare students for a career (Britton, 1982). However, these performance and education tracks are rife with severe limitations. The literature reveals that these tracks narrowly focus on Western traditions, over-emphasize ensemble performance, do not encourage diversity and multiculturalism, do not properly prepare teachers, lack any musical depth and understanding, and foster atmospheres of female exclusion (Baker, 2003; Belz, 2006; Britton, 1982; Howe, 2009; Jorgensen, 2003; Kirchhoff, 1988; Leornard & House, 1971; Walker, 2008; Reimer, 1989; Swanwick, 1999). As a result of these limitations, a new phenomenon has emerged in American undergraduate music education; the Performing Arts degree. The concept of the Performing Arts degree is a new model in American higher education designed to offer undergraduate music students with a more comprehensive music degree.

Due to the limitations, there is concern that undergraduate music programs are not providing students with a relevant or at all useful degree (Robinson, 2009; Walker, 2008). Many of the traditional model degrees end up holding little practical value for gaining meaningful or consistent jobs in music.

This study seeks to shed light on this new model for music in higher education through understanding the experiences in one such non-traditional program. Through in-depth examination of these experiences, much can be learned about the program in order to help music in higher education continue to grow, develop, and evolve in the American academy.

### **Background of the Study**

Despite a relationship with higher education dating back to the Middle Ages (Haskins, 2001; Janin, 2008), the necessity of music in higher education is often questioned. While economic issues often play an important role, there are certainly other important factors (Slaton, 2012). Thanks to a laundry list of limitations associated with the modern performance and education tracks of the Bachelor of Music degree to be discussed at length in Chapter Two, these questions have become more relevant moving forward. While the historical role, context, and styles of the Bachelor of Music programs have changed, the overall experience has “not improved” (Colwell, 2000a, p. 2). However, the more comprehensive alternative to the B.M. in performance or education was designed to mitigate the limitations by providing a more responsible, marketable, and useful degree program (Robinson, 2009; Walker, 2008). This Performing Arts concept offers undergraduate students at a growing number of institutions, including New York

University, Northwestern, Brown, and Franklin a chance to have experiences that they are not able to gain in traditional performance and education programs (Schechner, 2004). These Performing Arts programs in music attempt to overcome the limitations of the traditional tracks by offering experiences in areas such as music business and audio and music technology (Baskerville, 2010; Beckstead, 2001; Deal & Taylor, 1997; Gilde, 2007; Millner, 1992; Rapaport, 2003; Simoni, 2003). However, there is little available research on the essence of these performing arts programs and the experiences of the music students involved. This qualitative, phenomenological study seeks to fill that gap. By studying the experiences of the students who are involved with one of these programs, future performing arts music students and higher education music leaders in both traditional and performing arts models can use these experiences to continue to improve undergraduate music programs in the academy.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The performing arts degree in music is a relatively new phenomenon. As a result, there is little work illustrating or highlighting the experiences gained through this more comprehensive study of music in higher education. In addition, much of the literature on Performing Arts degree programs is focused around theatre or arts in general (Carlson, 2004; Jackson, 2004; Schechner, 2004). While a wealth of information exists illustrating the history of higher education, the history of music in higher education, and the limitations and problems associated with the Bachelor of Music undergraduate curriculum in performance or education, little is known about these new experiences

(Belz, 2006; Britton, 1982; Howe, 1998; Jorgensen, 2003; Kirchhoff, 1988; Leonard & House, 1972; Walker, 2008; Reimer, 1989; Swanwick, 1999).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of senior undergraduate music students in a Performing Arts music degree program. By gaining some understanding of these experiences, a clearer picture of this new phenomenon can begin to come into focus. While the qualitative results are not generalizable, the findings and experiences can begin to inform the ongoing discussion regarding the direction and future of music in higher education among music administrators and leaders in both traditional and emerging programs throughout American academia.

### **Research Questions**

This phenomenological study was guided by only one research question: How do senior, undergraduate students in the Clemson University Performing Arts music major describe their lived experiences in the program? In other words, what is “the very nature of the thing” (van Manen, 1990, p. 177). In order to fully understand this essence, several concepts guided the project (Creswell, 2013). How do these actors in the phenomenon describe their own musical background and experiences? How and why did they come to attend Clemson University and the Performing Arts major? Lastly, what do they describe as salient musical experiences within the program? The research question and guiding concepts allowed me to clarify the phenomenon “through the eyes of the participants” (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 90).

### **Research Method**

This study utilized a qualitative, phenomenological research design in order to understand the experiences of senior undergraduate Performing Arts music majors at Clemson University. Phenomenology was ideal for this type of question as it allowed me to gain a “grasp of the very nature” (van Manen, 1990, p. 177) of the experience. As the phenomenon may be “a program, an organization, or a culture” (Patton, 2002, p. 105), the Performing Arts music major at Clemson University served as the program or phenomenon. Purposive sampling was used to select the research participants. The participants were all senior undergraduate Performing Arts music students at Clemson University. Due to their experience with the phenomenon, the Performing Arts music major at Clemson University, the selected participants were “information rich and illuminative” (Patton, 2002, p. 40). As a result of this purposive sampling technique and the phenomenological research method, experience with the program was the only factor in the selection of participants. The primary data source for the study was in-depth in-person interview with the participants. In addition, observation and document analysis were used to check interview information against “program documents and other written evidence that can corroborate what interview respondents say” (Patton, 2002, p. 559). This provided a method of triangulating the qualitative data sources. These multiple sources help to make the data more rich and the findings more complex (Glesne, 2011).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Every research study is “informed by higher-level theory” (Glesne, 2011, p. 5). However, qualitative research is typically “not explicitly driven by theory” (Glesne, 2011, p. 37). Being a qualitative phenomenological study where the point of the research

is to understand the experiences of the participants, this study does not seek to prove formal hypotheses (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 2011; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008; Patton, 2002). This study is guided by the broader theoretical perspective of interpretivism. Interpretivist researchers believe the world is constructed by each knower (Sipe & Constable, 1996). As a result, there exist “many truths” (Sipe & Constable, 1996, p. 158). This is consistent with the phenomenological concept of searching for the meaning and essence of the experience (Patton, 2002). In this study, the “truths” (Sipe & Constable, 1996, p. 158) are the experiences of each of the students in the Performing Arts music major at Clemson University. As “humans are storytelling organisms,” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2) this interpretivist, phenomenological study takes the stories as truth from the perspective of those experiencing the phenomenon (Glesne, 2011). It is from these experiences and individual truths that the essence of the experience is understood.

### **Researcher’s Perspective**

A researcher’s background affects “what they choose to investigate” (Malterud, 2001, p. 483). As I pay “increased attention to researcher subjectivity in the research process” (Pillow, 2003, p. 176), this background can prove valuable in understanding issues, problems, and cultural norms of the field. “If reflexivity is thoroughly maintained, personal issues can be valuable sources for relevant and specific knowledge” (Malterud, 2001, p. 484). Thus, by engaging in the reflexive process of understanding my own background, assumptions, preconceptions, and ideas, my knowledge becomes a strength in my work. I currently teach clarinet, music appreciation, music history, and

chamber music in a non-traditional Performing Arts style higher education setting. I do believe that experiences in the arts help students to acquire skills in critical listening, collaboration, and creativity that apply across fields, domains, and even majors. I have witnessed inspired students ascend to new levels of creativity through artistic exercises, programs, and challenges. These very benefits of music have been thoroughly documented in the work of many scholars (Britton, 1982; Crutcher, 2004; Dewey, 1934; Gardiner, 1996; Koops & Taggart, 2011; Livingston, 2010; Mark, 1996; Thwing, 1897; White & Heller, 1983). I have also seen students react to the arts in a variety of ways. This only further illustrates the epistemological framework of this study that there are in fact “many truths” (Sipe & Constable, 1996, p. 158) as we can all hear and understand a piece of music differently. Also congruent with the interpretivist tradition, I am personally involved and invested in my research (Glesne, 2011). As I seek to understand the “general condition” (Stake, 1995, p. 437) of the experiences of senior Performing Arts music students at Clemson University, I will be closely involved and highly motivated. While in the tradition of interpretivism, this involvement necessitates an awareness and acknowledgement of my own musical subjectivity (Peshkin, 1988). With this awareness, I will be able to conduct research that adheres to the guidelines of the interpretivist epistemological tradition while engaging my subjectivity in a way that makes a “distinctive contribution” (Peshkin, 1988, p. 18) to my research.

### **Limitations**

There are a number of ways that this research may be limited. Due to a number of reasons, the results of this study are not generalizable. The findings cannot be applied to

all Performing Arts degree programs. This is due in part to the narrow scope of the inquiry, the variation among these emerging programs, and the fact that qualitative results themselves are not generalizable (Glesne, 2011). Also, with the interpretivist paradigm, it is recognized that there are many truths (Sipe & Constable, 1996). As a result, it is entirely possible for the data collected during this study to be interpreted differently. This would, in turn, lead to different themes emerging, and therefore different findings. While the steps taken to ensure the validity and credibility of the study will be discussed in Chapter Three, a final limitation of this study is the possibility of researcher bias. Throughout the study, I served as the primary collector of data through the interviews, observations, and document analysis. As a result of this fact coupled with my previously discussed researcher perspective and subjectivities, there does exist the possibility of researcher bias.

### **Delimitations**

Being a phenomenological study, the only criteria for the selection of participants was their experience with the phenomenon. As a result of this purposive and homogeneous sampling procedure all participants are alike only in their knowledge of and experience with the Performing Arts music major as seniors at Clemson University (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 2011; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008; Patton, 2002). Therefore, institution, year in school, and major served as delimitations to narrow the scope of the study. No regard was given to gender, age, background, or any other qualification. By limiting the scope of the study in this manner, I was able to get to the essence of the experiences of the participants familiar with the phenomenon.



## Significance of the Study

This research on the experiences of Performing Arts music students in this emerging style of program is necessary and significant for a number of important reasons. Firstly, as a new and still developing style of undergraduate music major, there is little literature on this phenomenon. A great deal of the performance studies or performing arts literature is actually focused on theatre and dance in academia (Carlson, 2004; Jackson, 2004; Schechner, 2004). Another block of literature examines the performing arts in academia in terms of the economics of facilities and audience generation (von Szeliski, 2008; Zausch, 1996). There exists a sizable gap to be filled regarding the experiences of Performing Arts *music* students in this style of major without regard for financial issues (Barr, 2004). By getting to the essence of that experience at Clemson University, this study begins to fill that gap. In addition, while music in American higher education has no doubt changed over the years, it “has not improved” (Colwell, 2000a, p. 2). This has even led authors to question the necessity, value, and use of music in the academy (Robinson, 2009; Walker, 2008). Given the myriad of unique skills that are earned through study of music to be discussed at length in Chapter Two, marginalization of music in American higher education would create a cavernous skill void within the academy. As Middle Ages and early American institutions valued music for its ability to aid in flexibility the of mind, inspire creativity, and foster collaboration and virtue, losing these skills would constitute a divergence from the historical tradition of music in higher education. Music’s current inclusion in higher education remains as a pillar representing the original purpose and social responsibility of the academy to better future generations

of leaders and citizens by providing these skills identified as necessary (Rudolph, 1990). As such, the fact that the limitations of the traditional Bachelor of Music degree in performance or education has precipitated scholars to question the use of music in higher education is unacceptable and represents a violation of the academy's initial responsibility. As the Performing Arts music degree is aimed at mitigating these limitations discussed in Chapter Two, understanding the experiences in this type of program and filling the literature gap is paramount. In order for these limitations to ultimately be alleviated and for music to achieve "curricular legitimacy" (Johnson, 2004, p. 117) and climb from the basement of the ivory tower where it currently resides as an "academic stepchild" (Valentine, 1946, p. 34) that "has not improved" (Colwell, 2000a, p. 2) growth must take place. However, in order for this improvement to take place it is necessary for music leaders and administrators in higher education to have more access to more perspectives, knowledge, and information. While not generalizable, by sharing the experiences in this particular program, music leaders at Clemson can better understand ways to improve the major, and therefore inform and add to the legacy of both higher education and music by contributing to a larger discussion regarding the future of music in the American academy. The process of elucidating the experiences of students involved in the Performing Arts music major at this particular and specific institution may possibly further a discussion regarding the role of music in higher education that in fact leads to the improvement Colwell (2000a) references and upholds the academy's responsibility to society (Rudolph, 1990).

### **Organization of the Study**

This research study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One presents the background, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, research method, theoretical framework, researcher's perspective, limitations, delimitations, and significance of the study. Chapter Two presents a review of the literature that includes the historical role of music in higher education, music skills and modern historical context, and recent trends in music education in the American academy. Chapter Three details the methodology used in the study. This chapter includes the setting, selection of participants, instrumentation, data analysis, ethical considerations, and validity. Chapter Four presents the findings of the study and includes themes that emerged during data analysis and coding. Lastly, Chapter Five provides a summary of the study, a discussion of the findings, implications of the findings for practice, and gives recommendations for further research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter presents the development of music as a discipline in higher education. In addition, this review places the study within a broader historical and societal context. The role of music in higher education has continually evolved and adapted to serve the changing purposes of the academy. With historical roots in the Medieval university traced through recent trends, this development is viewed chronologically to highlight the historical context of music in higher education while providing an argument for the necessity of the study. The project seeks to add to the body of literature by investigating the experiences of the actors currently participating in this particular Performing Arts music degree program.

In order to contextualize these experiences, the review moves from a broad review of historical function and involvement of music in higher education to providing an understanding of the reason for music's involvement in the academy in the first place to highlighting the recent trends and how the skills are currently being used. By discussing the skills and learning outcomes gained from higher education musical study, the skills of creativity, critical listening, and collaboration are used to demonstrate the essentiality of music to higher education. From there, the phenomenological methodology is reviewed and justified. While little literature exists on the music Performing Arts degree in general, studies demonstrate how phenomenology has been effectively applied to other musical research to elicit and illuminate experiences. While "the love of music for its own sake must be considered the basic reason for the place that music holds in American schools," (Britton, 1962, p. 27) this chapter demonstrates a myriad of other reasons for its inclusion in higher education.

The literature is reviewed on the historical role of music in education, the skills earned from a musical education are demonstrated, a modern historical and societal context is established, recent trends are reviewed, and the phenomenological methodology is justified in order to set up the need for this research into the experiences of senior undergraduate Performing Arts music students at Clemson University.

### **Music in the Medieval University**

Higher education in general remains as perhaps one of the most significant and enduring achievements of the Middle Ages (Janin, 2008). Added to this, “music has always been welcomed as a precious influence in college life” (Dickinson, 1915). This legacy lives in the histories, traditions, and even the curricula of modern institutions of higher learning (Byrd, 2001). Beginning with the Medieval university, music has always been an instrumental part of the academic higher education experience (Haskins, 2001). It is thought that “the starting point of education, and the way to wisdom, until the end of the eighteenth century was the seven liberal arts, divided into the trivium and the quadrivium” (Haskins, 2001, p. xxxii). These liberal arts formed the basis for study for most Middle Ages university students (Janin, 2008). In addition, these liberal arts were even considered to be “much superior to the manual or mechanical arts” (Janin, 2008, p. 42) and were characterized by a “flexibility of thought and freedom” (Carpenter, 1955, p. 144). Music fell into the latter of these two distinct categories along with arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy (Carpenter, 1955; Paetow, 1910; Perkin, 2006; Rait, 1918; Rashdall, 1936; Schachner, 1962; Scott, 2006). Approached mathematically, music in the Middle Ages academy was based on the early work of Pythagoras and was thought of in terms of ratios and science (Janin, 2008). While there remains scholarly debate regarding the role played by the quadrivium in the early Medieval university, its presence is unmistakable

(Dyer, 2009). It was at times obscured in the French universities, but always maintained a larger presence at Oxford (Paetow, 1910). Rashdall (1936) agrees that while Oxford and the German universities required musical work, there is little mention of music at Paris and the French universities. There is also thought that of the quadrivium, arithmetic and astronomy simply helped determine religious holidays and music was an inexact science that merely helped organize Psalter and Church music (Schachner, 1962). In spite of this, by the late fourteenth century, “in the universities of Central Europe it (music) became a prescribed text” (Dyer, 2009, p. 23). This early involvement provides the historical context for music in higher education and sets the stage for the necessity of music in the academy.

### **Music in the Early American University**

Moving forward, modern American universities are undeniably “a product of the Middle Ages,” (Haskins, 2001, p. 3). This aids in understanding the modern role of music in the United States’ higher education system. To further understand this historical underpinning, music study became a requirement “for promotion to the master’s degree” (Dyer, 2009, p. 24) at the University of Oxford by the early fifteenth century. The fact that the founders of Harvard intended to re-create Oxford and Cambridge and that “higher education in America begins with Harvard,” (Rudolph, 1990, p. 3) firmly demonstrates the intended and undeniable historical position of music in the American academy. The early colleges and universities founded in America were patterned after these English predecessors (Axtell, 1971; Britton, 1982; Housewright, 1967; Mark, 1996; Thwing, 1897). Music has maintained a role in American higher education since the beginning. Music in colleges originally served to provide culture to young men during intellectual training (Thwing, 1897). In addition, music was viewed as an effective and economical means of educating a large group of students in both culture and

religion (White & Heller, 1983). This is consistent with higher education's responsibility to "inculcate virtue" (Vine, 1976, p. 115) and to promote public well-being. In addition, despite many of the early American settler's distrust of music and its secular possibilities, music was still an effective means of conveying religion in a memorable manner. Harvard College President Rev. Henry Dunster was even involved with revising and updating earlier Psalm books (Sunderman, 1971). The Bay Psalm Book was even printed in his home (Britton, 1982).

As the academy in America developed, the role of music only became more engrained as music became increasingly more and more promoted as an academic discipline (Veysey, 1965). As music continued to join the American academy, many early schools of music were organized and structured based on the European model (Moore, 1961). As such, American music education cannot be easily separated from its European history (Keene, 2009). As this development continued, many major institutions began offering music as an academic discipline. Sustained programs were established and developed at Harvard in 1875, Yale in 1894, and Columbia in 1896 to be followed soon after by conservatories at Oberlin, New England, Cincinnati, and Peabody (Housewright, 1967; Keene, 2009; Sunderman, 1971). With these institutions now offering music as an academic discipline, music began to separate from its role in providing culture, balancing out the sciences, and assisting with performing church music (Veysey, 1965).

### **Performance or Education**

As the field of music continued to be promoted and developed, a typical modern higher education music course of study evolved. This course of study was ideally designed to prepare students for careers in music (Britton, 1982). Currently, the Bachelor of Music degree consists of either a music education or music performance track (Music Business, 2009). These tracks

became further isolated from the changing needs of the profession thanks to a number of severe limitations.

As one limitation of this system, the American musical academy has traditionally focused narrowly on Western music traditions (Belz, 2006; Jorgensen, 2003). Even non-Western traditions have come to be covered under the Western umbrella term of Classical music (Jorgensen, 2003). The process of defining non-Western music in Western terminology has historically served to limit the contributions of non-Western composers, performers, and ideas. In addition to this, most world music has historically been under-represented at all levels of education. Even jazz has been limited by being forced into this performance or education model. This has caused jazz in academia to have a historically difficult relationship with the higher education establishment (Murphy, 1994; Prouty, 2005). As jazz is a traditional music born from African American styles, this raises an important issue regarding diversity and multiculturalism in musical higher education while highlighting a history of exclusion (Gridley, 2012). The Yale Seminar of 1963 and the Tanglewood Symposium of 1967 also found that musical education in the academy had yet to figure out how to best “deal with” (Britton, 1982, p. 100) America’s indigenous and popular music (Petchauer, 2011). As more than eight hundred colleges and universities offer courses in jazz history, introduction to jazz, and jazz appreciation, perhaps this has begun to change in the academy (Gridley, 2012). However, as these courses are mainly introductory and broad survey classes, they do little to change the historical confusion regarding jazz music in higher education. As a result, music in higher education continued to narrow its focus to Western music. Thanks to this narrow focus, development of music in higher education was slowed and music’s quest for “curricular legitimacy” (Johnson, 2004, p. 117) was severely hindered. While the necessity of English, math, and the sciences is widely agreed upon, music



has been forced to continually defend its worth thanks to this limiting effect. It is for just this reason that Alan Valentine in 1946 referred to music as an “administrative and academic stepchild” (Valentine, 1946, p. 34). These specific and often rigid tracks of study ultimately limit students’ higher education musical experiences.

Another concerning limitation specific to the performance track in higher education has been an over-emphasis on solo Western literature. In a typical Bachelor of Music degree in performance, performance techniques and ensembles often come at the expense of chamber music, world music, secondary instruments, and/or contemporary techniques (Walker, 2008). This performance focus through emphasis on performing ensembles and performance techniques comes at the expense of any deep musical understanding (Kirchhoff, 1988; Leonard & House, 1972; Reimer, 1989; Swanwick, 1999). This has been a consistent contributor to negative attitudes towards the performance focus and music in higher education in general (Swanwick, 1999). The limiting focus on solo literature, and more specifically Western solo literature, in the B.M. in performance degree ultimately leaves the student with a degree holding minimal value. This becomes even more troubling for the B.M. performance degree when it is understood that America has long had a surplus of competent performers that simply cannot all be absorbed into performance professions (Mark, 1996).

While “musical education and its effect on musical life is something wondrous to behold” (Britton, 1982, p. 99), the music education track in higher education has also raised similar problems and limitations. A bachelors degree in music education is ideally designed to prepare the student to enter the classroom themselves and teach music concepts and techniques to their own students at various levels. However, with the over-emphasis on performance ensembles and Western music mentioned earlier, many music education majors are completely unprepared to

enter the world of teaching (Belz, 2006; Britton, 1982; Jorgensen, 2003; Kirchhoff, 1988; Leonhard & House, 1972; Reimer, 1989; Swanwick, 1999). This is despite the agreed upon fact that “there is the need for the music education student to be a competent teacher” (Hoffer, 1974, p. 41). For whatever reason, the art of teacher training has a minor and “almost negligible role to play” (Colwell, 2000b, p. 19) in music education programs. This is coupled with the fact that the students rarely receive much training or teaching experience supervision (Berg, Woody, & Bauer, 2002; Verrastro & Legler, 1992). Past Music Educators National Conference President Charles Hoffer (1974) even noted this trend when he said that the “practice and observation experience was largely abandoned” (Hoffer, 1974, p. 42) in the academy’s music education programs. This has contributed to student feelings of unpreparedness and insecurity about entering the profession of educating the next generation of musically literate members of society (Jorgensen, 2003). McDowell’s (2007) work shows that placing a greater emphasis on field experiences and by starting them sooner, could work to alleviate some of these common and widespread student concerns. However, she goes on to discuss the difficulties associated with such a programmatic change. Time, money, and a rigid curriculum stand in the way of a change that could actually help music education students (McDowell, 2007). This is further indicative of a rigid performance and education system in the musical higher education academy that is limiting music students’ experiences.

As the process of becoming a professional musician or music educator requires significant apprenticeship, these issues have fostered a troubling problem within American music education (Colwell, 2000a). This pervasive feeling of being unprepared has created a frightening shortage of qualified music educators (Lindeman, 1998). To take this a step further, Ingersoll (2001) shows that the shortage of educators is actually caused by students in education programs

not even entering the profession. Hellman's (2008) study further substantiates this with regards to music education with the finding that many of his pre-service music education subjects had no intention of actually becoming music educators. With concerns over their own preparedness and competency, graduates of higher education music education programs are shying away from the profession. Even the effort to mitigate this issue is met with concern. It is now possible for any musician to obtain a teacher certificate and a master's degree to enter the education system in roughly a year (Colwell, 2000b). This directly calls into question the validity, or even worse, the need for these university music education programs at all (Colwell, 2000b).

Lastly, both tracks of music education and performance have also suffered greatly in terms of gender equality. The history of American musical higher education has largely focused on major male leaders (Howe, 2009). In terms of performance, many textbooks and courses fail to mention the overwhelming and significant historical contributions of women to the field of performance, composition, and pedagogy (Baker, 2003). This puts up a barrier for female performers and furthers a culture of exclusion for women in music (Gates, 1994). For a profession in need of qualified members, this barrier is further evidence of a musical higher education tracking system that is detrimental to the field (Lindeman, 1998).

With all of this in mind, important questions have been raised regarding the practicality of these degrees and the ensuing "marketability of these students after their graduation" (Walker, 2008, p. 1). These issues simply further illustrate the ongoing question regarding the degree to which these traditional undergraduate music programs have "any useful application in the real world" (Robinson, 2009, p. 1) at all.

### **Musical Skills and Outcomes**

In addition to serving the needs of promoting culture and religion, music in higher education provides its students with an important set of skills (Mark, 1996; Thwing, 1897; White & Heller, 1983). In addition to teaching students learn how to think, music and the performing arts provide students with opportunities to learn discipline, self-respect, perseverance, and cooperation (Wright, 1994). The process of studying musical masters also provides students a specific set of intellectual traits (Dickinson, 1915). The intense study of music as an academic discipline provides opportunities for improvement in self-discipline, emotional control, handling of successes and failures, and creativity (Johansson, 2012; Livingston, 2010). In addition, Schmidt, Zdzinski, & Ballard (2006) found that music education majors in particular showed tendencies toward mastery, cooperation, and intrinsic motivation. This is likely due to the training and dedication required of musical study that enables the musician to creatively retrieve information when needed (Kellogg & Raulerson, 2007). Jorgensen (2003) also found that study of classical style music helps to better contextualize historical development. McCarthy (2003) agrees that historical study and research in music education has the unique ability to broaden perspectives. Through the dedicated and intense study required of musical talent development, students gain skills that seamlessly transition to other aspects of education, life, and society. Musical training also helps to foster polyphonic and critical listening, collaboration, and decision making according to Wheaton College president and cellist, Ronald Crutcher (Crutcher, 2004). The personal experiences of Crutcher (2004) are further echoed by Smialek and Boburka (2006) in their study that found cooperative learning experiences that are natural to music increased critical and perceptive listening skills. This is in addition to further skills of attention control and focus found by Duke, Cash, and Allen (2011) in their study of sixteen undergraduate music majors.

Historically, music was also accepted as a component of the public school curriculum thanks to being intellectually, morally, and physically beneficial (Mark, 1996). The Yale Seminar on Music Education in 1963 and the later Tanglewood Symposium in 1967 both even determined that in k-12 education, study of the arts and humanities would enhance excellence in the sciences (Britton, 1982; Mark, 1996). The committee recognized the importance of understanding the human experience through the arts (Mark, 1996). Music performance has also been used as a tool for understanding both musical and scientific concepts (Mark, 1996). Long before the Yale Report, German philosopher Hegel further illustrated this connection by insisting that while there was an undeniable emotional component, musical study required a dedicated commitment to mathematical laws and principles (Kaminsky, 1962). By creating and experiencing the music, the student gains a deeper understanding of the scientific and mathematical subject matter. All of these skills, joined with the skills of understanding a musical notation/symbol system and creative interpretation gave Howard Gardiner (1996) empirical reasoning to include music as one of his Multiple Intelligences. The collaborative nature of music also highlights the assertion that the intelligences rarely work alone and include an emotional component (Gardiner, 1996; Kaschub, 2002). In other words, the skills gained through musical study translate across fields, contexts, and even intelligences.

The musical skills of organization, order, and structure were even used as teaching tools for physically and mentally handicapped students dating back to the 1870's (Sunderman, 1971). The process of practicing and performing music at places like the School for the Deaf and Dumb in Cedar Springs, SC provided students with a sense of self-worth and accomplishment in addition to pure musical enjoyment (Sunderman, 1971).

The skills acquired through music study are also recognized to aid in language and literacy skills with music and literacy going “hand in hand” (McIntire, 2012). Mizener (2008) agrees that musical study reinforces language development thanks to the skills of organization, rhythm, and structure. Neurologically, Chandrasekara and Kraus (2010) show evidence that music training even induces changes in the brain. Motor, auditory, and visuo-spatial regions of the brain can be positively altered through instrumental musical study. This translates to a better vocabulary and overall reading ability (Chandrasekaran & Kraus, 2010).

Lastly, jazz musical study has also been cited as a means for improving skills in creativity, decision making, idea integration, and community development (Barrett, 1998; Biasutti & Frezza, 2009). With its fast paced changes, improvisational style, and collaborative nature, jazz study provides training in a set of skills that are traditionally difficult to teach and develop (Gridley, 2012).

### **Music’s Relevance to Higher Education and Society**

As a result of these essential skills and the fact that “music is the highest of the arts,” (Dewey, 1934, p. 296) music’s relevance to both higher education and society is clear as well as Britton’s idea that music was a “proper subject for inclusion in the academy” (Heller, 2001, p. 94). Through skills such as critical listening, collaboration, decision making, development of self-worth, and organization, musical study provides unique training within higher education. It is these very skills that make music an integral component of modern higher education. To further illustrate music’s important role, the essentiality of higher education to society in general must also be understood. In a broader context, higher education is historically necessary to society, and music is a necessary component to higher education.

The historical context, necessity, and function of higher education was detailed previously in this chapter. This context provided by writers such as Rudolph (1990), Veysey (1965), Carpenter (1955), Haskins (2001) and others on the historical beginnings of the university system up through the American development highlight the important role played by higher education to society. While the academy certainly served the purpose of providing civility and religion along the way, higher education and the early curriculum also served as a means to prepare graduates to think critically for the betterment of society (Rudolph, 1990; Vine, 1976). It is through understanding this historical context that the need for music in higher education and the need for higher education in society is fully illustrated. In fact, music in higher education is responsible for “success in society, success in school, success in developing intelligence, and success in life” (Petress, 2005, p. 112).

### **Music Technology**

However, society changes and “technology is changing how we deliver education” (Kuzmich, 2012, p. 46). This makes technology one of the fastest developing trends in higher education music. As technology has the power to transform music in higher education, it’s an essential component of music education that is only going to become more pervasive (Beckstead, 2001; Simoni, 2003). As a result, “graduates in music must be able to work comfortably” (Deal & Taylor, 1997, p. 17) with this music technology. Higher education institutions are certainly involved in this development as they utilize their resources to aid in the evolution. Berklee College of Music and Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis offer online and in-person training for emerging technologies (Kuzmich, 2012). In addition, “faculty at Stanford University, The Pennsylvania State University, the University of Illinois, the State University of New York at Potsdam, and Florida State University were among the early developers of

instructional software” (Peters, 1992) for music. This continuing development often occurs at a frightening speed that leads to much apprehension among music educators at all educational levels (Greher, 2011; Mercer, 2009). This makes the continued study of music technologies in higher education essential. The dizzying array of developing music technologies ranges from teaching aids to audio recording software to performance tools and is rapidly changing (Criswell & Menasché, 2009). Despite this undeniable explosion of technology in music and music education, the benefits and problems with this technology are still being debated (Stivers, 2007). Stivers (2007) ventures concerns over the music created and enhanced in this manner and its possible vulgarity. There also remain concerns regarding how technology will affect the creativity fostered by music in higher education (Challis, 2009). In addition, concerns exist over the intent of technology and how it is used in the university in particular (Winterson & Russ, 2009). However, despite concerns that only further illustrate the emergence and development and validate the need for continued inclusion in higher education for study, music technologies offer an opportunity to mitigate some of the limitations of the traditional performance/education tracks. Music technology can, in fact, be used to the benefit of the academy (Peters, 1992). Music technology can assist in minority recruitment and retention through inclusion of ideas and expanded world views (Clements, 2009). Kardos (2012) found that music technology programs in higher education can increase diversity, increase confidence, and further musical opportunities. The calls for music technology competency are thankfully being answered as institutions strive to prepare “college music students with the knowledge and skills necessary to use technology effectively while learning and teaching” (Deal & Taylor, 1997, p. 24). In fact, thanks to the emerging technology, the time has never been more favorable to music educators in higher education institutions (Webster, 2002).



## **Music Business**

Another important development in music in the American higher education academy is the emergence of music business courses and degree programs (Baskerville, 2010; Gilde, 2007; Millner, 1992; Rapaport, 2003). This is an effort to answer the call for more practicality and job market relevancy lacking in many of the traditional programs (Colwell, 2000b; Robinson, 2009; Walker, 2008). Thanks to this effort, handbooks, guides, and full texts have emerged aimed at guiding students into productive and practical careers in music (Baskerville, 1982; Krasilovsky, 2000; Rutter, 2011). Ideally these programs are designed to provide a practical education to students outside of the traditional performance and education tracks discussed earlier. They “provide students with the fundamental tools they need to succeed in the industry as non-players” (Music Business, 2009, p. 17). This is not designed as a fall-back degree program, but rather an alternative to the traditional models. These programs have become much more popular as an emphasis has been placed on music as a vocational career (Goldberg, 2005). The concept of music as a profession coupled with the limitations of the performance and education tracks discussed previously in this chapter have led to this emphasis (Burrack, 2009). While separate degree programs from audio or music technology, these trends in music business still develop alongside emerging technology (Jones, 2013). This marriage of the practicality of the music business degree with the audio or music technology programs is nowhere more evident than in virtual industry internships (Anderson & Channell, 2010). The business component and the technology aspect are helping those in higher education music answer the call of making “music for all” (Clayton, 2001, p. 6). This concept is a driving force in addressing the issues and limitations of diversity, cultural exclusion, over-emphasis on performance, and teacher preparation, found within the traditional models of music in higher education (Clayton, 2001).

## **Performing Arts Degree**

The Performing Arts music degree model is aimed at combining the practicality of music business and audio and music technology with the best aspects of the traditional models of performance and education in the American academy. The Performing Arts degree seeks to truly answer the call of “music for all” (Clayton, 2001, p. 6) by eliminating these limitations. At Stanford, the Performing Arts are being used as a vehicle for non-Western studies, minority inclusion, and discussion of feminism (Schechner, 2004, p. 8). Performing Arts models have been used at schools such as NYU, Northwestern, Brown, and Wisconsin (Schechner, 2004). However, the focus of many of these programs is still primarily theatre (Carlson, 2004; Jackson, 2004; Schechner, 2004). There remains little literature regarding how music functions in the Performing Arts paradigm. It is this lack of literature that makes this research study necessary. The gap created by this lack of information must begin to be filled in in order to fulfill the mantra of “music for all” (Clayton, 2001, p. 6) and to further music in higher education that at this point has “not improved” (Colwell, 2000a, p. 2).

## **Phenomenology**

Based upon the dearth of literature on the Performing Arts music degree and the research questions seeking to understand the experiences of the musicians and students in this type of degree program, phenomenology was the ideal methodology to fill this gap and to answer the research questions. Based on the work of Husserl (1970) and his student, Heidegger (1996), phenomenology as a methodology is based upon understanding these experiences. This tradition was then expanded upon by van Manen (1990) and Moustakas (1994). Despite differences in the handling of subjectivities, assumptions, and researcher background, the underlying desire to elucidate the experience remains consistent.

Phenomenology has been used throughout arts and music research as an appropriate means to reveal these experiences. The two are seamlessly paired as art and music are based upon our perception of the event and experience. As a result, a great deal of phenomenological research exists regarding the field of music analysis, music theory, and composition (Anderson, 1995; Batstone, 1969; Lewin, 1986; Smith, 1995; Welton, 2009). These studies sought to understand the experiences of those making and performing music. The role of perception of music has also been a popular use of the phenomenological methodology. Using the phenomenological principle of experiences, studies have used the methodology to illuminate how music is perceived from the perspective of those perceiving it (Alerby & Ferm, 2005; Biancorosso, 2008; Dura, 2006; Madison, 2006).

These studies and dissertations prove the worth of phenomenology as the ideal means to access and understand the experiences of those experiencing the phenomenon. By utilizing this methodology, this study will use similar qualitative techniques of interviews, document analysis, and observation in order to show the experiences of the senior Performing Arts music majors at Clemson University. By understanding these experiences through following in the musical phenomenological tradition established in this section, the research questions can be elucidated and the sizable gap in the literature can begin to be filled in.

## **Summary**

This chapter reviewed the literature involving music in higher education. In doing so, a broad context for both the importance of music in and to the American academy was created. The evolutionary role of music from the Middle Ages academies up through the emergence of business and technology based music study to the Performing Arts style degree that is the focus of this study is illustrated. The skills earned through music make the case for the importance,

and the limitations of the traditional model make the case for the newer models. However, it is the gap in the literature regarding the current models that make this study necessary. By adding to the void in the literature, this study will continue the legacy of music in higher education that dates back to the Middle Ages and music education can continue to play “an important role not only for the individual, but also for society as a whole” (Heimonen, 2006, p. 120).

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

As detailed in Chapter One, the primary goal of this qualitative phenomenological research study was to understand the experiences of senior music Performing Arts majors in this emerging style of higher education program (van Manen, 1990). As much of our social lives and interactions as humans cannot be reduced to “numbers, nor to a norm” (Glesne, 2011, p. 8), a hermeneutical or interpretive phenomenological methodology was utilized to understand and describe these experiences as detailed in this chapter (Connelly, 2010; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Mackey, 2004; Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1990). In order to perform this study, van Manen’s (1990) guidelines for interpretive phenomenology were used. However, as is the case with phenomenological studies, these guidelines served more as an outline than as a rigid protocol. “The open, emergent nature of qualitative inquiry means a lack of standardization” (Glesne, 2011, p. 25). This is consistent with the idea that qualitative research methodologies such as phenomenology “tend to be less formal in nature and procedure” (Lunenburg & Irby, 2008, p. 165). This fluid research structure enabled me to get to the essence of the participant’s “subjective human experience” (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 726). This methodology chapter begins with an overview of the phenomenological research method including a discussion of van Manen’s (1990) hermeneutic method used in this study. This is followed by a discussion of my role in the study as the researcher, a detailed description of the participant selection process, the qualitative data collection techniques, the data analysis process, ethical considerations, and a discussion regarding the validity of the results and findings.

#### **Phenomenology**

As the stated goal of this research was to understand the experience of senior Performing Arts music majors at Clemson University, phenomenology was ideal with its emphasis on understanding the essence through the eyes of those living it. Phenomenology describes “how one orients to lived experience.” (van Manen, 1990, p. 4). This emphasis on lived experience makes phenomenology the perfect methodology for illuminating these truths (Sipe & Constable, 1996). This section is organized into a history of phenomenology research, a discussion of transcendental and hermeneutic or interpretive phenomenology, and a justification for the chosen structure of the study.

Phenomenology is deeply rooted in philosophy (Connelly, 2010; Lunenberg & Irby, 2008; van Manen, 1990). The philosopher Husserl (1970) was interested in the study of experience from the perspective of the individual. Husserl believed that the traditional scientific method had limitations when it came to understanding these human experiences, and that this scientific method had “nothing to say to us” (Husserl, 1970, p. 6) as researchers trying to understand these experiences. However, Husserl did believe that a scientific approach was necessary in order to bring out the necessary elements of a shared lived experience (Lopez & Willis, 2004).

From this desire to have a scientific process to describe the lived experience, transcendental or descriptive phenomenology was born (Moustakas, 1994). One of the chief characteristics of Husserl’s descriptive phenomenology is the use of bracketing. Husserl (1970) believed that in order to fully understand the essence of the experiences of those being studied, that the researcher “must shed all prior knowledge” (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 727). Instead of confronting and dealing with these preconceptions, descriptive phenomenologists bracket and put aside these biases so that they do not affect the study (Connelly, 2010). Husserl referred to

this bracketing procedure as the epoche and espoused the “raising of knowledge above every possible doubt” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). As a result of this bracketing or epoche, the researcher in a descriptive phenomenological study focuses on a description of the experience that is not based on the interpretations of the researcher (Creswell, 2013).

Interpretive or hermeneutic phenomenology is based on ideas from Husserl’s student, Heidegger (Connelly, 2012; Lopez & Willis, 2004). Interpretive phenomenology is not solely interested in a description of the participant’s experiences, but rather the meanings of the participant’s lifeworld (Heidegger, 1962). These interpretive practices are prized for their depth and understanding of the interaction with the phenomenon rather than mere explanation (Mackey, 2004). Another primary difference between the descriptive tradition of Husserl (1970) and Moustakas (1994) and the interpretive tradition of Heidegger (1962) and van Manen (1990) again deals with bracketing. Heidegger emphasized that the presuppositions and expert knowledge that led the researcher to the study serve as valuable guides to inquiry (Koch, 1995). According to this interpretive tradition, the background, knowledge, presuppositions, and biases of the researcher cannot be bracketed “because they are a part of the person” (Connelly, 2010, p. 127). As these prior experiences of the researcher “never can be removed” (Lunenberg & Irby, 2008, p. 90), it is essential to be explicit about them. This process of making the background and presuppositions explicit can serve to make the inquiry meaningful (Lopez & Willis, 2004).

While the more scientific and certainly clear process of the descriptive phenomenology described by Moustakas (1994) would have been helpful, it was not right for this study. I was drawn to study the phenomenon of Performing Arts music majors at Clemson University primarily due to my own background and experiences. As a result, the scientific process described by Moustakas (1994) where my knowledge would need to be pushed aside would

simply not work. While the process was perhaps less clear, the ideas and concepts of van Manen's (1990) interpretive or hermeneutic style better suited my purposes in the study. While lacking the scientific process of Moustakas (1994), van Manen (1990) describes the hermeneutic phenomenology process as a "dynamic interplay among six research activities" (van Manen, 1990, p. 30). The six activities described by van Manen (1990) are:

1. Turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
2. Investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
3. Reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
4. Describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
5. Maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon; and
6. Balancing the research context by considering parts and whole.

By using these activities, I analyzed and interpreted the meanings of the experiences of the Performing Arts music majors at Clemson University.

### **Role of the Researcher**

Throughout qualitative inquiry, the researcher assumes many roles. In a sense, in qualitative studies, the "researcher is the instrument" (Patton, 2002, p. 14). Patton (2002) goes on to say that the credibility of a qualitative study depends, in large part, upon my skill and competence. This initially placed a great deal of pressure on me as the researcher. There was a great deal of inherent pressure behind the responsibility of being the instrument for describing the lived experiences of my participant's interaction with the phenomenon (Patton, 2002). However, as I entered the process keenly aware of my own background and "subjectivities" (Peshkin, 1998, p. 17), I was ultimately prepared to utilize my skills in order to strengthen the study. In fact, as stated previously, personal issues can be a source of strength (Malterud, 2001).



However, Malterud (2001) also points out the importance of these personal issues and backgrounds being assessed “during all steps of the research process” (Malterud, 2001, p. 484). In this way, my music and higher education background and experience served as a valuable tool throughout the process. This is not at all uncommon as personal experiences often serve as the starting point for a phenomenological study (van Manen, 1990). The need to consistently review and assess my background is also linked to a second important role of the researcher: a learner (Glesne, 2011). By maintaining a learner’s perspective throughout the process, I was forced to remember that my goal was not to prove a hypothesis, elucidate a positivist truth, or even produce generalizable results (Creswell, 2007; Glesne, 2011; Patton, 2002). My primary goal was to understand the lived experiences of the senior Performing Arts music majors at Clemson University (van Manen, 1990). By assessing the preconceptions associated with my musical subjectivities, background, and experiences, I was able to use them as a means to build rapport with the participants (Glesne, 2011). In addition, my knowledge of the cultural norms of music in higher education eased conversation throughout the interviews and allowed me unobtrusive access during observation (Schein, 1992). It was this “researcher as learner” (Glesne, 2011, p. 60) perspective or “receptive passivity” (van Manen, 1990, p. 249) that allowed me to keep an open mind throughout the process. This was essential throughout the process as it was possible for my own musical subjectivities and higher education background discussed in Chapter One to affect my data analysis and therefore my findings. It was also essential that I did not allow my insider status to allow me to take my rapport for granted (Glesne, 2011). To ensure these issues did not negatively affect or influence my research, numerous precautions were made in order to preserve the validity of the study. These precautions and strategies are discussed in greater detail in the Validation section of this chapter. By assessing my subjectivities and experiences

throughout the process and maintaining the perspective of a curious learner in my research I was able to ultimately shed the burden of being the “instrument” (Patton, 2002, p. 14).

## **Setting**

Clemson University was founded in the late 1800s as a land-grant institution and is situated in a small town that is home to roughly 11,000 residents. The small town and University are located in the Southeast region of the United States. The University itself is home to a total enrollment of just over 20,000 students including both undergraduate and graduate students. The institution is classified as a Doctoral/Research Extensive University, enjoys full accreditation from the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and is consistently recognized as a top public institution in the United States.

The Department of Performing Arts at Clemson University is housed within a larger College that contains majors ranging from English, Visual Arts, to even Architecture that has just over 3,800 undergraduate and graduate students. The Department of Performing Arts has only been at Clemson University for just over ten years. The Department of Performing Arts works in conjunction with a world class performing facility that offers a full calendar of student ensemble performances and national and international artists. Student and guest artist concerts include shows in music, theatre, dance, and visual arts performances. The Performing Arts major itself is divided into three distinct categories; theatre, audio technology, and music. In terms of student enrollment, music is the smallest of the three categories. As a result of these three categories, the Department contains a diverse group of faculty working together from the various disciplines. The intent of this discipline diversity is to create and foster an atmosphere of creativity and collaboration. Within the music faculty in particular, the Department has eight tenure track professors. Interestingly, at the time of this study, only one is currently at the rank of Assistant

Professor. All tenure track music faculty members have their terminal degree. The Department of Performing Arts offers traditional classes in music theory and music history as well as history of country music, rock, jazz, and audio technology. However, the hallmarks of the degree program are the Performing Arts classes. These courses are taken with fellow music students in the program as well as those focusing on theatre and audio technology. The Performing Arts classes are where the comprehensive concept of the degree program is emphasized. These classes combine training in performance, resume development, arts administration, arts fundraising, advertising, music technology, and music business. These classroom music teaching responsibilities are supplemented by senior lecturers, lecturers, and one graduate assistant. In addition, the department hires a wealth of applied faculty for each individual instrument to teach one on one private lessons.

### **Selection of Participants**

In the process of selecting participants for this qualitative study, purposive sampling procedures were used (Connelly, 2010; Glesne, 2011; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008). This selection sampling procedure is characteristic of the interpretivist framework and allowed the phenomenon to be studied in depth (Patton, 2002). The five participants selected were chosen through a homogeneous sampling procedure (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 2011; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008; Patton, 2002). As a result, all participants are similar in their experience of the phenomenon being studied. The five participants were chosen as they represent the totality of the senior music majors in the Performing Arts undergraduate degree program at Clemson University. In addition, sample sizes in a phenomenological study will often be “relatively small” (Connelly, 2010, p. 127). This also falls within the 3-10 participant subject size recommended by Dukes (1984) in a phenomenological study in order to understand the experience as the subject lives it.

This is all consistent with the concept that “the important point is to describe the meaning of the phenomenon for a small number of individuals who have experienced it” (Creswell, 2013, p. 161).

## **Interviews**

In-depth interviews were used with all five research participants. A semi-structured, open-ended interview process was used as the initial means of understanding their experiences in the Performing Arts music program. Identified through the purposive and homogeneous sampling procedures illustrated in the previous section, and the interviewees were invited to participate in person (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 2011; Lunenburg & Irby, 2008; Patton, 2002). The beginning round of interviews began shortly thereafter. As the participants for the interviews, and the larger study, were purposely chosen for their experience with the phenomenon, no consideration was made for gender, background, or any other characteristic. Experience with the phenomenon of the Performing Arts major at Clemson University was the only determining factor for inclusion.

To better understand the participant’s experience with the phenomenon, and to find out things I “cannot directly observe,” (Patton, 2002, p. 340) open-ended and semi-structured interviews were conducted. As interview strategies are not exclusive, a combination of a conversational approach with a broad and guiding protocol was most ideal (Patton, 2002). This combination allowed me to remain open to reforming and adjusting questions and direction to the interview and to the emerging data (Glesne, 2011). This also allowed me as the interviewer to assume a role as a “conversational partner or collaborator” (Glesne, 2011, p. 120). This collaborative interview process is an important component of the broader interpretivist framework where communication is approached as a “transactive process” (Sipe & Constable,

1996, p. 158). “The interview process needs to be disciplined by the fundamental question that prompted the need for the interview in the first place” (van Manen, 1990, p. 66). As a result, these interviews were structured around the study’s one research question: How do senior, undergraduate students in the Clemson University Performing Arts music major describe their lived experiences in the program? In addition to this lone research question, three broad concepts guided my questions as I determined what it was that I sought to understand (Glesne, 2011). Serving as a grand tour style question, I initially asked the participant to discuss their musical background and musical experiences (Spradley, 1979). This gave the interviewee an opportunity to speak comfortably about material with which they were familiar. Due to my own musical background, it also provided ample opportunity to follow up on shared musical experiences while simultaneously building and developing rapport (Glesne, 2011). The second guiding concept during the interviews was the question of what brought the interviewee to Clemson University and as a result, the Performing Arts undergraduate music program. The final general guiding interview concept was to have the interviewee describe their experiences in this Performing Arts music program. This allowed the interviewee to describe experiences with the program that were salient and important to them as well as what they have learned in the program through courses and performances. This broad and only semi-structured interview protocol allowed for an understanding of what the experiences in the program meant to the participant (Creswell, 2013). In addition, the semi-structured protocol allowed for flexibility so that changes could be made as needed (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 2011).

Each interview was followed by a period of evaluation and immediate note taking (Glesne, 2011). This enabled me to reflect on the interview. This post-interview reflection was designed to invoke memories of important details, consider what could have been done

differently, and consider anything surprising or unexpected. This served as an essential means of triangulation to ensure validity to be discussed in more detail later in this chapter (Creswell, 2013).

All of the interviews throughout the process were recorded. A digital recording device was used for each of the interviews in order to ensure a reliable recording would be available for review and transcription. As an “hour of steady talk is generally an appropriate length before diminishing returns set in for both parties,” (Glesne, 2011, p. 114) most interviews stayed roughly within those parameters.

All of the interviews for the project were transcribed by myself in an effort to interact with the data throughout the process. In order to learn what the interviews could teach me, the recordings were transcribed as they were completed. This is in keeping with Glesne’s (2011) warning to not wait until all interviews are completed to being transcribing. This also aided in the process of reflexively by allowing me the opportunity to reflect on the handling of the interview, the questions, and any areas of the process that need improvement (Pillow, 2003).

### **Document Analysis**

During the fieldwork process, essential documents were also analyzed as a means of triangulating the qualitative data sources to provide validity to the study (Patton, 2002).

Throughout the process, performance programs were analyzed in order to confirm, and therefore strengthen, salient musical performance events brought up during the open-ended interviews.

These programs were collected and analyzed due to their “significance” (Lunenberg & Irby, 2008, p. 94) to those experiencing the phenomenon. These “program records” (Patton, 2002, p. 4) or “public documents” (Creswell, 2013, p. 160) were essential in corroborating material from

the interviews. In addition, the historical documents analyzed provided a clear “context” (Glesne, 2011, p. 86) to the study.

## **Observation**

Observation is “one of the key tools for collecting data in qualitative research” (Creswell, 2013, p. 166). Through direct observation, I was able to study the participants during their interaction with the phenomenon. Using my “five senses” (Lunenberg & Irby, 2008, p. 92) I was able to describe the setting, people, and occurrences of the Performing Arts music major at Clemson University. I was able to observe the participants in their natural music major environment as they were interacting with and experiencing the phenomenon being studied. Through these observations, I was able to notate the participant’s “activities, behaviors, and actions” (Patton, 2002, p. 4) in the context of the phenomenon. As with the document analysis, these observations both triangulated the qualitative data sources and provided rich material for follow up interviews. Through the direct observations where I was a mere observer that did “not interact with the participants” (Lunenberg & Irby, 2008, p. 93), my goal was to observe, not to influence the outcome of the study. The “usual setting or location” (Lunenberg & Irby, 2008, p. 92) of the phenomenon involved direct observation of music classes, rehearsals, and performances referenced as salient in the interviews and analyzed in the documents. This is particularly important for this study as the participants are artists in training. As “artists are involved in giving shape to their lived experience, the products of art are, in a sense lived experiences transformed into transcended configurations” (van Manen, 1990, p. 74). For the observation process, some of the steps outlined by Creswell (2013) were used to guide the procedure. These steps involved selecting the site and obtaining permissions, identifying who or what to observe and for how long, determining my role, developing and utilizing an

observational protocol, recording information, and preparing thick and rich narrative descriptions of the observation (Creswell, 2013).

## **Data Analysis**

In a sense, the method of phenomenology “is that there is no method” (van Manen, 1990, p. 30). It is in this tradition that van Manen (1990) encourages phenomenological researchers to select or “invent” (van Manen, 1990, p. 30) the methods needed for their study. Despite this ambiguity, van Manen’s (1990) six research activities still guided the data analysis of this study. It is through this process of organizing the data collected via interviews, document analysis, and observation that I can figure out what I have learned and make sense of the experience (Glesne, 2011).

In order to analyze the data, the research activities of reflecting on the essential themes and describing the phenomenon through writing and rewriting guided the analysis (van Manen, 1990). The identification of these essential themes helped to give “control and order” (van Manen, 1990, p. 79) to the research study. Through this process, I was able to then understand what van Manen (1990) called the structure of the experience.

This “phenomenological reflection” (van Manen, 1990, p. 77) allowed me to understand the “meaning of the lived experience” (Creswell, 2013, p. 195). van Manen (1990) describes three approaches to identifying thematic statements: the holistic approach, the selective approach, and the line-by-line approach. The holistic approach involves attending to the text as a whole, the selective approach requires finding statements that seem particularly essential to the understanding, and the line-by-line approach provides a detailed look at “every single sentence” (van Manen, 1990, p. 93). Using NVivo 10 to organize the interview data, van Manen’s (1990) holistic approach was employed first. Each transcript was read multiple times to obtain a



“sententious phrase” (van Manen, 1990, p. 93) to capture the significance of the text. Next, the line-by-line approach was employed (van Manen, 1990). By asking the question, “what does this sentence or sentence cluster reveal about the phenomenon or experience” (van Manen, 1990, p. 93) of being a senior Performing Arts music major at Clemson University, I was able to take a more detailed look at the data. This line-by-line approach was instrumental in allowing me to immerse myself in the data and “discover what concepts” (Glesne, 2011, p. 195) it had to offer. With the small sample of participants that had experienced the phenomenon that is characteristic of phenomenological research, this line-by-line approach was particularly important as it enabled me to interpret their experience credibly (Connelly, 2010; Creswell, 2013; Dukes, 1984). Throughout this analysis process, NVivo was essential in maintaining order and control of the wealth of interview data. A node was assigned for each of the important phrases and statements as each interview was meticulously mined for information using the holistic, selective, line-by-line approach discussed earlier.

As the process of phenomenology is “to let that which shows itself be seen” (Heidegger, 1962, p. 58), the writing and re-writing research activity allowed me to show what the data was showing (van Manen, 1990). This is further consistent with the idea that “writing is a continuation” (Glesne, 2011, p. 197) of the thematic development process. van Manen (1990) also reminds us that phenomenological research is not conducted utilizing a strict protocol, the procedures represent a “dynamic interplay” (van Manen, 1990, p. 30). In phenomenology, “writing is our method” (van Manen, 1990, p. 124) and this study was no different. This writing process fixed the thoughts of the participants “on paper” (van Manen, 1990, p. 125) as “writing is closely fused into the research activity” (van Manen, 1990, p. 125).

The data display process was also important in allowing the reader to “see the deeper significance, or meaning structures, of the lived experience” (van Manen, 1990, p. 122). As data displays help to see “the overall patterns” (Glesne, 2011, p. 199), these were utilized throughout the writing process to illuminate and organize key themes. As phenomenology allows the researcher to “invent” (van Manen, 1990, p. 30) methods and procedures, I also felt the freedom to “experiment with a variety of forms” (Glesne, 2011, p. 200) of representation. The ultimate data display representing the study’s themes that was created through this freedom, invention, and experimentation can be seen in the following chapter (Glesne, 2011; van Manen, 1990).

Throughout the data analysis process, I was careful to remain strong in my orientation to the “fundamental question” (van Manen, 1990, p. 33). In this case, what are the lived experiences of senior Performing Arts music students at Clemson University? By adhering to the research activities of reflecting on the themes, writing and re-writing, and finally data display, I was able to carefully and thoroughly capture and describe how the participants experience the phenomenon (Patton, 2002).

### **Ethical Considerations**

“Ethical considerations should accompany plans, thoughts, and discussions about each aspect of qualitative research” (Glesne, 2011, p. 162). As a result, careful consideration of ethical issues was made throughout this research project. The first step in the ethical process was to obtain permission for the investigation from the Clemson University Institutional Review Board. The participants were initially contacted in person regarding their potential participation in the study. At that time, and throughout the process they were informed of the expectations, scope of the study, and the terms of their confidentiality. Prior to the initial interview, I reviewed the confidentiality and informed consent agreement and obtained the signature of the participant.

This document was provided to the participant via email ahead of time so that they could have an opportunity to thoroughly review the document in advance. The participant was provided a copy of the form and the original was safely stored in a locked security box. The informed consent form was necessary as it made the participants aware that participation was voluntary, alerted them to any aspects of the research that might affect their well-being, and let them know that they may choose to end their participation at any time (Glesne, 2011).

Throughout the data collection and analysis process, my first “responsibility and obligation was to participants” (Lincoln & Denzin, 2008, p. 542). As a result, the anonymity of the participants was maintained in all manuscripts. The pseudonyms used for each participant were chosen by the participant at the first interview. In addition to the pseudonyms used, the specific institution used in the study was also not revealed so as to further preserve their anonymity. As “participants have a right to expect that when they give you permission to observe and interview, you will protect their confidences and preserve their anonymity” (Glesne, 2011, p. 172), this was an essential aspect of the research process. The interview recordings are to be destroyed following the dissertation defense and are digitally stored in a secure lock box. As transcripts contain only pseudonyms, they will be preserved as they do not represent a threat to anonymity.

In addition, member checks were utilized throughout the process to ensure the work properly represented the ideas of the participant (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 2011; Patton, 2002). This gave further “weight to their views and their choices” (Strike, 2006, p. 68). Despite the fact that research partnerships tend to be “generally asymmetrical” (Glesne, 2011, p. 171) with power disproportionately on the researcher’s side, the careful consideration and maintenance of

participant's anonymity and the consistent use of member checking allowed the participants to speak comfortably and openly regarding their experiences with the phenomenon.

## **Validation**

The issue of validity is much debated in qualitative research (Glesne, 2011). "Most agree that we cannot create criteria to ensure that something is 'true' or 'accurate' if we believe concepts are socially constructed" (Glesne, 2011, p. 49). This issue of validity is further complicated by the interpretivist framework of this study where the "world is constructed by each knower/observer" (Sipe & Constable, 1996, p. 158). As a result, the concept of trustworthiness is often used in qualitative research as a means for a researcher to claim their work is plausible or credible (Glesne, 2011). For this study, I employed what Creswell (2013) calls "validation strategies" (p. 250). Creswell (2013) illustrated eight techniques or strategies for ensuring this validation. As attending to all eight is "not necessary in any one study" (Glesne, 2011, p. 49), the strategies of prolonged engagement in the field, triangulation, peer review, clarification of researcher biases, member checking, and rich and thick descriptions were used throughout (Creswell, 2013).

Prolonged engagement in the field allowed me to develop rapport while gaining a true understanding of the participants and culture (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 2011). As "trust needs to be developed before people can be willing to provide certain kinds of information" (Glesne, 2011, p. 59), this prolonged engagement in the field was essential in gaining valuable interview responses (Creswell, 2013).

Triangulation was also used throughout as a validation strategy (Creswell, 2013). As discussed earlier in this chapter, triangulation of data sources was an important part of validating the study (Patton, 2002). By utilizing in-depth interviews, document analysis, and observation, I

was able to “provide corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251) on the phenomenon being studied. This process contributed to “research trustworthiness and verisimilitude, or a sense of authenticity” (Glesne, 2011, p. 48).

For this study, the peer review procedure discussed by Creswell (2013) was fulfilled by my dissertation chair and committee. My committee and chair served as a devil’s advocate in an attempt to keep me honest and consistent throughout the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The committee and chair kept the researcher honest, asked hard questions about methods, and listened to the feelings of the researcher about the process (Creswell, 2013).

As discussed earlier in the Role of the Researcher section of this chapter and the Researcher Perspective portion of Chapter One, clarification and clear discussion of my background and biases were an important component of validity in this study (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 2011; Patton, 2002; Peshkin, 1988). It was necessary for me as the researcher to discuss my past experiences, biases, prejudices, and orientations that not only led me to the study (Glesne, 2011; van Manen, 1990), but “that have likely shaped the interpretation and approach to the study” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251).

As “a general ethical guideline is that research participants should be able to read, observe, or somehow engage with the art and to discuss its representation before it goes to a wider public” (Glesne, 2011, p. 180), member checks were an important element of this qualitative study. As discussed earlier in the Ethical Considerations portion of this chapter, the participants were given the opportunity to review all material and interpretations of their thoughts. By being asked to review manuscripts and “critical observations or interpretations” (Stake, 1995, p. 115), the participants “play a major role” (Stake, 1995, p. 115) in the research process.

Lastly, rich and thick description was used to describe the participants under study (Creswell, 2013; Geertz, 1973). This enables the reader to draw their own interpretation about “meaning and significance” (Patton, 2002, p. 438). As “the bedrock of all qualitative reporting” (Patton, 2002, p. 438), this process was essential in interpreting and portraying the lived experiences of senior Performing Arts music majors at Clemson University.

By using these “validation strategies” (Creswell, 2013, p. 250), I was able to provide both trustworthiness and validity (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 2011). The techniques of prolonged engagement in the field, triangulation, peer review, clarification of researcher biases, member checking, and rich and thick descriptions established validity (Creswell, 2013).

## **Summary**

This chapter thoroughly described the methodology used in this phenomenological qualitative study. Initially, the phenomenological process of van Manen (1990) was discussed. This was followed by clear discussion of my role as the researcher. The chapter continued with discussion of the techniques used for the selection of participants, data collection, and data analysis. Next, the ethical implications of the study and the measures taken to ensure ethical standards were maintained were discussed. The chapter concluded with the strategies used to validate the study (Creswell, 2013).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to understand the experiences of senior Performing Arts music students at Clemson University. As an emerging degree program, understanding these experiences is necessary to shed light on the changing landscape of music in higher education. Five senior Performing Arts music students participated in semi-structured and open-ended interviews for this study. Each of the interviews took place in the familiar confines of the Clemson University Department of Performing Arts and lasted between 60-75 minutes. These interviews brought to light stories about the participant's musical backgrounds, performing and classroom experiences, relationships forged in the major, their personal and academic growth, and their preparedness for careers in their field. The conversations demonstrated an academic experience in the major that was full of unique experiences and collaborative experiences, yet remained plagued by the burden of issues such as pre-conceived expectations, facilities, rigor, and an issue with faculty buying into the program. Ultimately, the participants program expectations led to their college choice. Based on their own expectations and college decision, a set of pros and cons were developed by each participant. This, in turn, directly affected the opportunities each participant took advantage of. As a result of this progression, the ultimate results of the program in each of their eyes are elucidated.

This chapter presents the findings of the study based on data and information collected through interviews, document analysis, and observation. This data illuminates the experiences had by these senior Performing Arts music students at Clemson University. The chapter begins with a broad demographic description of the participants in the study. This is followed by a discussion of the coding process used to determine the themes and sub-themes that describe the

experiences of the participants. Lastly, I will discuss each of the themes and sub-themes found in the interview data.

### **Participant Data**

This section provides basic descriptions of the participants involved in this study. As stated in Chapter Three, all of the participants for this research study were purposefully chosen based on their experience with the Performing Arts music major at Clemson University. No other demographic information was used to select the participants. As a result, the only characteristic in common is that all of the five participants were senior Performing Arts music majors at Clemson University at the time of data collection.

As the participants represented the totality of senior music students in the Performing Arts program at the time of data collection, I have intentionally avoided specific and individual descriptions in order to ensure confidentiality is maintained. While pseudonyms were chosen by each of the participants to be used in this study and the time of data collection was not revealed, specific information could still jeopardize this confidentiality due to the size of the program and the small number of participants.

All of the participants in this study were traditional undergraduate students. Both male and female students were involved, all of them were full time students without full time jobs, and all participants were unmarried and without children. Again to maintain confidentiality, the musical focus (instrument or voice) of each of the participants is not named. However, the sample contained both vocalists and instrumentalists. Lastly, each of the participants began Clemson University as true freshmen fresh out of high school.

### **Coding**



Interviews with the five participants, documents provided, and observation notes provided the data for this study. The interviews with the five participants were conducted in various spaces throughout the Department of Performing Arts building during a two-week period. These interviews were recorded and then promptly transcribed personally by the researcher. Following this process, each individual transcription was reviewed along with the recorded interview to ensure accuracy. After the transcription and review process, participants were given an opportunity to review their interview transcript for any errors or mistakes and to provide additional comments and insights. This provided an essential opportunity for the participants to participate in the study and was an essential means of member checking (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 2011; Patton, 2002). Two of the participants took this opportunity to amend and clarify some of their comments that were made in the course of the open-ended interview process.

The heart of the coding process was the phenomenological research goal to identify the lived experiences of those participating in the phenomenon (van Manen, 1990). As a result, just as in the interview process, I was careful throughout the coding process to always keep the guiding research question in mind; How do senior, undergraduate students in the Clemson University Performing Arts music major describe their lived experiences in the program? As van Manen (1990) advises, the analysis process involved a number of styles and techniques. The techniques described by van Manen (1990) and used to identify the essential themes of the study were the holistic method and a line-by-line technique. Each of these styles proved important in capturing how participants experienced the phenomenon (Patton, 2002). For the initial holistic technique, the transcripts for each of the participants were read separately in their entirety in order to gain a broad understanding of participant experiences in the major. Notes taken

throughout the holistic reading process allowed me to develop a long list of very general potential thematic areas. These transcripts were read holistically several times in order to ensure that I fully understood the content in each participant's story. Following these holistic readings, *NVivo10* was used to do line-by-line readings and coding of each of the transcripts. This process allowed me to go over every detail and statement from the participants. The software program then allowed my initial thoughts and thematic ideas generated in the holistic reading to develop into nodes. From there, statements and thoughts from the transcripts were organized and sorted into more specific themes.

The early line-by-line readings of each of the transcripts revealed an abundance of themes and sub-themes. *NVivo10* was essential in organizing these ideas. Each of the subsequent readings then resulted in further clarification of the larger thematic picture. Many important statements from the transcripts were actually assigned and re-assigned many times throughout this line-by-line process as the picture came into focus. In fact, many statements remained coded in multiple theme areas indicating a relationship between the theme areas. Through both the holistic and line-by-line approaches, five essential themes were eventually revealed; (1) expectations, (2) college choice, (3) "it's kind of like pros and cons," (4) opportunities, and (5) results. Once these areas were identified, each of the transcripts was then individually reviewed holistically to ensure that these themes accurately captured the essence of the experience of being a senior Performing Arts music major at Clemson University.

Based upon the relationships identified throughout the transcriptions using *NVivo10*, I began to organize the themes and sub-themes into a data display. This was an important component of the coding process as it allowed me to visualize and better understand "the overall patterns" (Glesne, 2011, p. 199) that had emerged in the data. The data display, which will be

presented in the following chapter, was the product of much experimentation and reflection (Glesne, 2011; van Manen, 1990). In addition to invaluable conversations with my dissertation committee chair that helped to further codify and organize the data, this process of reflection allowed the data to speak in a way that fully captured the essence of the experiences of the participants.

Once this data display was developed, another round of holistic readings took place to further ensure that the display correctly represented the experiences of the participants. This data display was also shared with each of the participants along with a description and explanation for the themes. This offered them yet another opportunity to “play a major role” (Stake, 1995, p. 115) in the research process. During this member check, the data display was met with no objection by any of the participants and all agreed that it portrayed an accurate visual representation of the essence of their experience as a senior Performing Arts music student at Clemson University (Creswell, 2013; Glesne, 2011; Patton, 2002). This member check validated the data display as it gave “weight to their views and their choices” (Strike, 2006, p. 68).

As this coding process was not a linear chain of events, but rather a “dynamic interplay among six research activities” (van Manen, 1990, p. 30), extensive reading, writing, re-writing, and reflection took place throughout the entire process. Ultimately, the themes of (1) expectations, (2) college choice, (3) “it’s kind of like pros and cons,” (4) opportunities, and (5) results, along with numerous sub-themes were identified to represent the experience of these particular senior Performing Arts music students at Clemson University. In the following sections of this chapter, these themes and sub-themes will be described in rich and thick detail with the illuminative voices of the participants themselves (Geertz, 1973).

## **Expectations**

One essential theme that emerged in all of the stories told by the participants concerned their expectations of the Performing Arts music program at Clemson University. As each of the participants spoke throughout the interviews at great length about what led them to the program, it became clear that these expectations were informed by a number of factors. Their own musical backgrounds, the notion of a Classical style music education versus a more Pop music orientation, and family traditions played vital roles in forming this larger theme of expectations that ultimately affected all of the other thematic areas exposed.

**Musical Background.** Each of the participants spoke extensively about their own musical backgrounds. They discussed salient middle and high school ensemble experiences, important musical performances and festivals, summer camps, and how long they've studied their musical trade. These stories permeated the entire interview and were never isolated solely to an introductory or background role. Rather, they served as a point of reference throughout the conversations. Carter, for example, began by talking about how he was involved in a wide range of activities, with music being the primary concentration. He says he:

was heavily involved in most everything like most other students. Uh, and I did all of the school plays, I was in marching, I was in concert band, I did solo and ensemble, I was uh on track, cross county, tennis, soccer, like I did everything I possibly could in high school. But, um most of my time was spent like in music.

While certainly not conceited or arrogant, he clearly takes pride in his versatility, and when asked about being able to perform in so many musical styles and groups he replied, "yes, do it all." This desire to do it all went on to shape the experiences he would take advantage of as a music student at Clemson.

Felicity referred to herself throughout the interview as a “junkie” for her field and elaborated on performances, lessons, and experiences that she had throughout middle and high school. While James’ approach to his current instrument is unique as he was largely “self-taught,” he does reference piano lessons early on. This was an experience that went on to shape his current musical ability and desire to be what he consistently called a “complete” musician. Also pertinent to understanding his musical background, he is quick to point out that “in my high school, music, or performing arts wasn’t large at all.” This gave him a decidedly different approach to the program from the other participants. For James, his experiences weren’t being compared to previous musical activities, lessons, or performances. Melissa referred to her musical experiences beginning for her in fourth grade and points out that she just “kept doing that forever.” She goes on to list concert and performing opportunities throughout South Carolina to Washington D.C. and even to Carnegie Hall that influenced her musical development.

While each of the participants began their musical journey at different times, with different levels of voracity, and some even began on different instruments, these early musical experiences would mold their larger sense of what they would expect from their chosen college music program. Donald discussed his experience at a summer music camp that had a profound effect on his musical development. “I want to say life changing, because that’s that’s when I really got interested in music.” He goes on to discuss this experience by saying: “but it really increased my interest in music when I went, because you were surrounded by everyone who was really good at their age and if you play with better musicians it makes you a better musician.” This experience from his musical background would shape his musical development and influence his own understanding of the Performing Arts music program at Clemson. Likewise,

Melissa's experiences in a conservatory style high school program would greatly shape what she expected out of the program. To her, this pre-college program was an "incredible um institution, um, and that really was the first time I got, I had ever had official" lessons.

Ultimately, for each of the participants, their musical experiences before entering the Clemson University Performing Arts music program bore a distinct relationship to what they expected out of the program and the degree. While specific components will be discussed utilizing their own words later in this chapter, Felicity's identity as a music "junkie," the rigor experienced by Donald at the summer music camp, Carter's desire to be a part of everything the program had to offer, Melissa's conservatory background in performance, and James' history in a high school program that didn't take the arts very seriously, all carried over to college to partially shape their view of the Clemson University Performing Arts music program.

**Classical vs. Pop Styles.** Another component of the expectations of the participants arose regarding the differences between Classical style music training and more contemporary or pop styles. This played a sizable role in shaping each of the participant's overall understanding of the program and their subsequent view of its value or worth. As discussed in Chapter Two, a more Classical style orientation would typically be found embedded in the curriculums of traditional schools and departments of music. This would include traditional music histories, music theories, and performing techniques. However, also as discussed in Chapter Two, this orientation is beginning to be seen by both researchers and practitioners in the field as limiting. So, with the emergence of the modern Performing Arts style music major, many of these programs are offering more pop music opportunities and less and less traditional Classical coursework. This less traditional coursework includes music history courses outside of the typical Western Music history curriculum. In addition, traditional courses in history that range

from Middle Ages chant to 20<sup>th</sup> Century styles development, Western harmony and analysis, and traditional orchestral and vocal ensembles are slowly being replaced. In their place are courses in American popular music, world music, and American musical styles like jazz and the blues. In addition, courses and curriculums that place a much greater emphasis on technology and recording techniques now litter the developing Performing Arts curriculum at many institutions. This shift is also seen at Clemson University and it played a significant role in forming participants' expectations, which eventually informed their larger sense of the program. Ultimately, the way that each performer viewed this transition away from traditional theory, history, and performance offerings went on to inform what they saw as pros and cons of the major, or as Melissa put it, "it's kind of like pros and cons."

As discussed in the music background section, each of the participants in the study had distinctly different musical backgrounds. This caused each of them to approach the program in much different ways. As a self-described "junkie," Felicity's journey into the Performing Arts program was full of traditional musical experiences. So, upon entering the program, she naturally gravitated toward traditional or Classical style ensembles and course offerings. She says that "I've always kind of stuck to the chamber, and classical style" in her background and was looking to do that at Clemson University as well. However, the program's shift away from the traditional experiences she was looking for left her with a decision to make.

So I wanted that Classical chamber kind of experience, and some contemporary, but, so they don't offer what I want, and um, then I then I just decided I was going to go and pursue different aspects of music, so.

However, this shift from away from the Classical styles of her musical background was not so seamless. Partly as a result of this transition, Felicity recounts, "I thought about transferring my

sophomore year, even though I've had so much success in this department and this college."

While there were certainly other issues at play to be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, the loss of a Classical style performing outlet was a prime component of this feeling. Ultimately, Felicity decided against leaving the program and instead adapted to the new, non-traditional course offerings. This shift prompted her to make the move from Classical to pop styles in her own work. In her final year in the program she began "putting more into a contemporary style." In this instance, for Felicity specifically, the Performing Arts music program's shift away from traditional courses and performance outlets gave her an opportunity to expand her abilities and musical horizons. "I've really wanted to get into just kind of like the pop world, I've never actually gone that route." This is not unusual for a traditionally or Classically trained artist whose focus would have been on traditional performance techniques, styles, and repertoire.

Felicity goes on to expertly discuss the musical and technical traits and difficulties inherent in both of the approaches. While she did not transfer and did get the opportunity to tackle new musical challenges that have always interested her, this shift still affected her larger view of the program. Felicity recounts that for her, what she saw as a shift towards a new and non-traditional focus has in some ways limited the options of participants. As a driving force behind her switch to pop styles, Felicity understood a truth that "I'm going to have to go make my own band in order to be performing," and "I think that's really disappointing and we could be doing a lot more with music, that's what I would say." The "a lot more with music" she referenced is a nod towards the Classical styles that were, in her mind, abandoned for modern techniques and performance opportunities.

Similarly, Melissa approached the program with a distinctly Classical background that included performances, lessons, and intense conservatory style training. With this background,



her expectation was to continue this development “because I definitely came in doing Classical.” So, like Felicity, her background knowledge and interests were forced aside due to the program’s orientation towards popular styles. Melissa laments that, to her mind, there is simply not a forum for her to utilize the Classical style background she brought to the program. As a result, again like Felicity, her desire, drive, and ability to perform Classical style music has diminished. In her own words, “here, my want and need to do Classical has um diminished since then, because there’s not really a forum to do it.” With this comes what Melissa viewed as a lack of opportunity in her area of interest. “It’s just uh, not a lot of opportunity.” So, while admittedly flexible, “I’ll stumble into it and it’ll work out just fine. I mold well to my surroundings,” Melissa is also of the mind that this pop music orientation has negatively affected the degree program. She said that “I don’t think most of us are going to come out at least musicians and actually be a performer.” Given her musical background before attending Clemson University in performance, this is an important factor. As a result, her musical background and the Department’s relationship with Classical and pop music styles have adversely affected her view on the program.

With his rigorous summer camp background informing his view, Donald doesn’t necessarily view a modern spin on the program curriculum as negative. He does, however, wish the Department had more traditional music theory opportunities. As one of the bastions of a traditional style Classical music curriculum, music theory is often one of the areas that becomes increasingly limited as Performing Arts programs shift towards more popular styles. Donald mentioned that he views music theory courses as being built on his experiences at the summer camp. This lends further relevance to the tie between musical background and expectations that inform the larger view. He stated that:

I really enjoyed it because it just built more onto what I learned at the music camps, and uh, I wish I could have gone further in it because I really liked it. But then, we only had our two semesters and we were done.

With this interest and his background in music theory gained through the background experience, Donald acknowledged that he “would have taken any theory class up until I didn’t like it anymore” and that “because it’s a, it’s a big part of the music, you know area,” he responds, “Yea, I think so” to the question as to whether the department should offer more music theory. So, while certainly not as overt as Felicity and Melissa, Donald’s disappointment over the limited theory offerings points to the same core issue for these participants. Classical or traditional offerings such as theory have been crowded out to make way for more popular, contemporary, and non-traditional courses and opportunities.

James, however, saw it much differently. Coming from a high school program that placed very little emphasis at all on music and the arts, his view of the music offerings are decidedly more supportive of the curriculum. With this different viewpoint, James saw the Performing Arts music major as clearly oriented towards the Classical style. He pointed out multiple times that it is the audio technology concentration that is, in fact, focused on pop music, and not the music concentration.

And so, I feel that performance-wise, like the music major is more geared to Classical performance, whereas the audio major, you find, that is, the audio major is essentially that live rock band performance, or any kind of live performance as in that area. Um, cause of you don’t find like electric guitars in orchestra.

He goes on to reiterate that “the music major is really more geared towards Classical performances.” While his view of the program is undeniably different, like the others his own

musical background combined with his understanding of the Classical vs. pop music orientations influenced his perception of the program as a whole.

**Family Tradition.** A final sub-theme concerning expectations emerged regarding the family tradition at Clemson University. As an institution, Clemson University embraces a family atmosphere. This Clemson family tradition played a key role in forming the expectations of Carter, Felicity, and Melissa. For Donald the family draw was not as direct and not as a result of being a legacy or a fan, but instead the simple result of the family and community atmosphere fostered by the institution. James, too, experienced a draw toward the Clemson family community, but not from his own parents or family. For James, it was the institution itself that pushed him to participate in the process of forming and shaping the family spirit. For all of the participants, this Clemson family tradition shaped their larger expectations of the program.

Carter proudly brought up in the interview that he was the fourth Clemson University student in the family. “So in addition to being the fourth, uh, musician child, I’m also the fourth Clemson student.” With only the broad question regarding what brought him to Clemson, he goes on to tell stories from his childhood of coming to Clemson football games, his familiarity with the campus, and the academic journeys of his older siblings. Even though his parents did not attend Clemson, the whole family gravitated to the atmosphere.

Um, well I mean aside from visiting here ever since I was... My dad used to take us to Clemson games when we were younger even though we have no affiliation to the school and then when my sister came here in 2000 that just started the chain of events that is four Clemson children.

While Carter did look at other schools with traditional music majors throughout the college decision making process, he is quick to admit that he never had any real expectations of

attending any of them. “To be honest, they were my back up schools because I just figured I’d be going to Clemson anyway.” He echoed this sentiment by saying that “but um, I think I just always saw myself coming here, and I don’t know, maybe part of me didn’t want to be the black sheep that didn’t come to Clemson.” Also, importantly, Carter entered Clemson University without a declared major. He toyed with the idea of a major in business, but ultimately came to the realization that he needed to be in the performing arts. “But, um the more I thought about it, the more I realized I just couldn’t do anything that wasn’t related to music,” “or anything in the Performing Arts.” This further illustrates the importance of the musical background and highlights the power of the family tradition at Clemson. Without any particular major, Performing Arts or otherwise, in mind, Carter chose Clemson largely due to his own family tradition. In addition, “um, so yea ever since my sister started coming here, I’ve essentially been a Clemson fan.” While certainly a sports reference, Carter also framed his being a fan in a context where he lauds the majors of his siblings, the location and town, and the overall academic reputation of the institution. This is demonstrated by the following quotes from our conversation.

Academics. I mean, cause I know that um, it, we have a really good education program here, and the construction science management, um while my brother was here, he was on the design build team, I don’t know if they even still have that, while he was on that they finished like second and third in the nation, uh, in their competitions. And I mean, that’s saying something for a small school in South Carolina.

He continues in his own words to say, “But um, but yea, so I just knew it was very good with academics as well. So, just piling the things on that were drawing me in.” “But um, I mean I just love the town, love how it feels like a small campus though it’s well over 15,000.” So for

Carter, who “just grew up loving the school and loving the town itself, and athletics, and just everything about this area,” his expectations of the program were a product of his love of the arts, his own musical background, and his own familiarity with the Clemson family atmosphere.

Felicity was much the same. Her experience and familiarity with the institution was also a driving factor in her decision to attend Clemson University. Unlike Carter, whose parents attended other higher education institutions but became Clemson “fans,” both of Felicity’s parents are Clemson alumni. She recounts with affection a story where during the college selection and application process her father playfully hid the acceptance letter from Clemson’s in-state rival, the University of South Carolina. “USC, my dad actually hid my acceptance letter from me, um, ‘cause he and my mother are both Clemson graduates.” So, it is no surprise then that “So, um, I have always grown up going to Clemson and have always imagined myself” coming to Clemson. While she is quick to point out a number of other factors that guided her college decision making, she also acknowledges that her parents being alumni definitely had an effect. When asked to what degree if at all this was important in the decision process, Felicity replied that “um, I would say a lot. Um, I think because I grew up coming to Clemson, I knew that it could be a home away from home.” She also openly admitted that her parent’s affiliation was important to her as well. She states, “and then they visit pretty frequently because of their ties to the university and they get a lot of joy from me coming here.” However, Felicity is also quick to maintain her own independence in the decision making process. When asked, “so, had the better decision for you been going somewhere else, you think you would have been comfortable making that call?” Felicity immediately and confidently replied:

Yes. Oh yea. I believe if I thought College of Charleston, um or USC even like could, if I felt they could give me all these connections as well, I think I would have gone there, but I just didn't feel it.

So, while certainly not the only reason, family ties were one important aspect used by Felicity in making her college decision, and in the end she identified with her own Clemson family and the larger Clemson University family. "Um, and a very unifying aspect and they keep, kept putting this like Clemson family, Clemson family, but they really do make it a Clemson family."

For the self-described adaptable and flexible Melissa, the family tradition came a little more in the form of pressure. While the decision process for Melissa ultimately came down to a conversation about money, influence from family and friends also played a role. While identifying herself as the sports mascot moniker, Melissa perfectly captured the financial component, her own flexible nature, and the University's use of a collective mascot to unite everyone as one family in one succinct quote. "Basically boils down to money, it all boils down to money, um and even USC is a little more expensive than Clemson, but, I was like well this is where I'll be, I'll be a tiger." So, while Melissa looked at a comparatively large number of undergraduate institutions, the money and pressure ultimately won over.

Well, I actually applied to Clemson as, I applied to like six or seven different places, Boston University, Furman, American University, um, Winthrop, here, I'm probably forgetting one, but those were like the big ones I was looking at.

However, in the end "and you know like a lot of my family went here, and so, you know everybody was like, oh yea, Clemson, go to Clemson, go tigers." So, in her own words, she simply decided that she'll "be a tiger."

Donald had far less pressures and influence in terms of overt personal family tradition. However, the atmosphere cultivated by Clemson University from this tradition did play a factor in swaying him and his parents to Clemson. “But Clemson was great, the, the city and the community here is very friendly and welcoming, and it was just a, a good trip that we made.” He goes on to state that while finances and the non-traditional program were important factors as Clemson had an edge “for mostly financial reasons” and that he “wanted to be a part of because it’s different, and that’s what I like, I like being a little different” and “I don’t want to follow, you know, the heard of sheep,” his parents were also involved as “my parents were also pushing me to come here.” While not as strong of a driving force as with Felicity, Carter, and Melissa, and only a part of the equation for Donald, this family tradition atmosphere at Clemson University was a factor.

As with much of his story, James’ approach to the Clemson family tradition was quite different. Coming from a high school program that did not at all prioritize music and the arts, James was only considering music as a minor out of high school. In fact, for James, “Clemson was one of the uh, schools that I specifically applied to because of the athletics that we have here.” “And I put that I wanted to major in biology and then later on go into pre-med, and go to med school, and I had music as a minor.” As a result, the programs and institutions he considered were not chosen for the music schools or departments, but rather for their athletics. So, unlike the others, James was not at all influenced by pressure from family and friends and was not initially romanced by the family and community traditions of the institution and the area. However, once at Clemson he did get an introduction to the Clemson University process of cultivating this family atmosphere.

Uh, actually had to uh, when I first got here, because I'm receiving a scholarship for out of state tuition, they had me uh, do this presentation at a football game in front of a whole bunch of donors, in the uh, President's Box. Like yea, like within a week of me being here (laughter). And I had to talk about uh, my experience at Clemson, and how I got here, and how I love it and I was like, I've been here a week.

While his journey to the Performing Arts music degree program at Clemson was unique and outside of the traditional forms of pressure from family and friends that affected the other participants, once there, he was not immune to the internal pressures of developing this tradition. While the story was certainly told comically, with a sense of humor, and without aggravation or annoyance, this story did further illustrate the existence of this family tradition theme.

Whether overt or indirect, each of the participants referenced a relationship with the family and community atmosphere that is a hallmark of the Clemson University tradition and aura. While experienced differently, and never negatively, the experience with this family tradition for each of the participants partly shaped their expectations of the program. Along with their understanding of the Classical and pop music styles and their own musical backgrounds, they each developed set of basic expectations of what the program would and should be. As reflected in the data display, these expectations bear a close correlation to their ultimate college selection that then feeds into each of their perceptions of the pros and cons of the Performing Arts music major at Clemson University, and ultimately, what they viewed as their results.

### **College Choice**

As can be seen in the display, an interactive relationship emerged in the data between Expectations and College Choice. This is evidenced in the multiple sub-themes that were coded in both the Expectations and the College Choice thematic areas. In particular, the sub-themes of



Musical Background and Family Traditions linked these two larger theme areas. As described in detail in the previous section of this chapter, each of the participant's musical backgrounds served as an important starting point in forming their expectations of the Performing Arts music major. In addition, participants, in their own ways, experienced the attraction of the family and community tradition at Clemson University. The individual experiences with these pressures and influences guided their decision making process in choosing Clemson University. However, musical background and family traditions and pressures weren't the only reasons for attending Clemson. As a result, sub-themes regarding Facilities and Money each played a role in the participants' narratives.

**Facilities.** For most of the participants, the issue of on-campus performing facilities came up infrequently with regards to their College Choice. For instance, Carter talked throughout his story about the experiences he had in and around the Brooks Center, but rarely mentioned the facility itself. The conversation was always about the artistic experience in the facility. However, at the end of the interview, he did reference a desire to see the Department of Performing Arts and Brooks Center facility grow. While discussing his wish that he could have taken more courses specific to his own musical and theatrical interests, he mentioned that he doesn't see that as possible at this point due to this limitation. "At this point I don't think it's possible just because we don't have the space." So, while this was not brought up as a deciding factor in his college decision, which primarily centered on the family tradition discussed earlier, it was something that he voluntarily brought up.

Also like Carter, Donald points out the space issue seen throughout the Department and Brooks Center facility. In reference to the limited space, Donald jokingly pointed out my own situation as a faculty member sharing an office. In addition to being evidence of rapport built

with the participant, this also demonstrated that while not a deciding factor in the college decision, like Carter the limitation was something he was certainly aware of. Melissa, too, noted the issue with space in the building. She pointed out a situation where “we just don’t have enough room to do much of anything.” The details of these stories are discussed at greater length later in this chapter in regards to pros and cons of the major.

Felicity, however, noted the Brooks Center facilities in a much more specific and positive light. In fact, for her, the Department of Performing Arts and Brooks Center were a major factor in her decision to attend Clemson University. So, while her family tradition certainly played a role, she also noted that she would have been comfortable going against that family pressure if it had been the right situation somewhere else. The importance of seeing and experiencing these facilities were a major reason she ultimately did make the decision to attend Clemson University. She discussed what she saw that impressed her about the facilities during this college selection process at great length.

Ok, so it was influential because you can see that the woodshop is directly next to the theatre so you can easily see that the sets were just wheeled in right from there and um, the black box theatre was right there as well. So, you had all these like elements right there, and then with the academic side, you know with it only being a short walk away from your classroom I was like, certainly your classes take you there. Um, I’m sure if you’re in a theatre class, when you go to learn about the different stages, you walk through those two stages. It was something I could see students being involved in. She continued to discuss the draw and intrigue of performing in the facility in order to defend why it was so important to her during the college selection process. To the question regarding what it’s like to perform in the Brooks Center, Felicity replied:

Um, it's soo cool. Because it's like the same environment that a professional, um, they've got those big like sound blocking walls, and you enter just like the professionals do, and you've got state of the art recording equipment all around you, and um it's very professional, and just kind of makes you feel like a star.

In relation to their eventual college choice, each participant viewed the Brooks Center and Department of Performing Arts facilities differently. James, who approached the University completely unfamiliar and originally thinking about athletics and not music, never mentioned the facilities. However, Melissa, Carter, and Donald all recognized after the fact of coming here some limitations in the facilities that would go on to shape each of their views of the Pros and Cons of the Major theme to be discussed in the next thematic area in this chapter. Felicity was the most vocal on the issue of facilities as, for her, it was an important factor in her decision making process. As portrayed on the data display (see Figure 5.1), the way each participant viewed the facilities would, in part, go on to shape what they saw as pros and cons of the major. In turn, these perceived pros and cons go on to influence the way they viewed the opportunities available, and ultimately their own results.

**Money.** Financial concerns were brought up voluntarily as a college choice factor with four of the five participants. Carter was the only one to not reference the financial aspect of the college selection process.

Felicity spoke eloquently about the selection process for both Clemson University and the Performing Arts music major. As discussed earlier in this chapter, in the section titled family tradition, her own music background, and the Brooks Center facilities played an important role in her final decision. However, finances were also quite important. Felicity is proudly putting herself through Clemson University. As a result, her list of college options coming out of high

school was rather limited. She discussed, with no specific prompting, how she focused her search on the South Carolina in-state schools due to this financial constraint. “Well, um, unfortunately with this economy I’m putting myself through school, so I had to consider the instate schools so I looked at PC, I looked at Winthrop, and I looked at College of Charleston, and USC.” So while a litany of other factors were certainly involved in her decision making, finances served as a limiting force on her potential college choices.

Melissa echoed this sentiment. Melissa (and James) looked at the largest and perhaps most artistically and geographically diverse group of institutions. However, as was the case with Felicity, money guided Melissa’s ultimate decision. “I applied to like six or seven different places, Boston University, Furman, American University, um, Winthrop, here.” However, despite this list of in and out of state institutions, money served as the factor that narrowed the list. This is succinctly demonstrated by her statement that it “basically boils down to money, it all boils down to money, um and even USC is a little more expensive than Clemson.” So her ultimate thought process was that:

and I thought Clemson, being that it was kind of, we were kind of on the precipice of a recession, it was kinda like you know starting to talk about these things, and instead of going to Boston, or American, or um Furman which were all about \$40,000.00 plus, a semester or year I can’t remember, but it’s a lot, so I ended up coming here to get in-state uh tuition and the um, scholarships.

Importantly with Melissa, “I guess the reason I chose Clemson was because it was the cheapest option.”

Donald described in the interview how he basically only looked at two different schools during the selection process. To my question as to whether the higher education institution that

hosted and administered the influential and “life changing” music camp during his musical development was in contention, he said that he never really considered it. To my follow-up question regarding why not, he responded that he was only looking in-state and that an out-of-state tuition bill was not feasible. “Um, those were the main two. I wanted to stay in-state, I didn’t want to go out-of-state. So.” My immediate question as to why was met quickly with, “For mostly financial reasons.”

James’ approach was quite different. As discussed earlier, James was initially looking for athletic scholarships. In fact, on his initial round of college applications, he was primarily considering a pre-med major. However, following an athletic career ending injury, he was contacted by Clemson University regarding his stated intent to minor in music.

I was actually looking to get uh, athletic scholarships, but, and Clemson was one of the, uh, schools that I specifically applied to because of the athletics that we have here. And I put that I wanted to major in biology and then later on go into pre-med, and go to med school, and I had music as a minor.

Following an audition tape, James was then contacted by the Department of Performing Arts about majoring in Performing Arts with a concentration in music. However, he still had a concern regarding money. While not overt like Melissa, Felicity, and Donald, James’ next question for the Department showed the importance of finances on his college decision making process. “And they uh, sent me back an email saying that we would love for you to major in Performing Arts. And so I asked them, would I be able to receive any scholarships?” Given his background in athletics and his interest in biology and pre-med, my immediate follow up was whether he had thought about music as a major before that point. To this he answered that “no, in my high school, music, or performing arts wasn’t large at all.”

With Donald, James, Melissa, and Felicity, money was one important part of the larger college choice decision process. While with each of them other factors were certainly also at play, finances were one part of the puzzle. As a result, musical background, family traditions, facilities, and money were sub-theme areas that all played a role in forming the larger College Choice theme area. It was then the musical background and family tradition sub-themes that linked the College Choice theme area to Expectations in such an interactive manner. These larger themes of why each participant chose Clemson University and the Performing Arts in Music major and what formed and informed their expectations then go on to shape what they see as the pros and cons of the program. These perceptions of the Performing Arts music major at Clemson University will be discussed in the next thematic area.

#### **“It’s kind of like pros and cons”**

Borrowing a quote from Melissa that described her overall impressions of the program, “it’s kind of like pros and cons,” this thematic area contains what each participant viewed as positives and negatives regarding the program. For each participant the way they viewed the positives and negatives of the Performing Arts music program was initially informed by their expectations and then by the reasons underpinning their college choice. These reasons and expectations would then lead to what they would each individually see as pros and cons of the Performing Arts major. These positives and negatives were ultimately a product of how they initially approached the degree program. The following discussion concerns the sub-themes of facilities, connections, faculty experiences, opportunities, and rigor.

**Facilities.** As discussed earlier in this chapter, facilities emerged as a sub-theme regarding both college choice and pros and cons of the major for the participants. This, then, served as a link between college choice and the “it’s kind of like pros and cons” section. While

Felicity spoke glowingly about the Brooks Center and its trappings, others saw the current state of facilities as a limitation of the program.

Melissa's view of the facilities was perhaps the most poignant and elaborately stated. She spoke throughout the interview about the limiting effect of the facilities. She ultimately arrived at the idea that "honestly I think a lot of it boils down to how big this building is and like not having enough room and also not having enough room in the budget, because obviously if people are like sharing offices." She continued to describe the office, performing spaces, and practice room situation as "ridiculous." Melissa referred to the facilities of other institutions throughout the conversation as a way of pointing out what she saw as a shortfall of the Department of Performing Arts. In fact, she saw the crowded Department and limited performing facilities as a factor in limiting larger performing arts opportunities.

Like I said, I think it boils down to not having a big enough building, I was like come on, let's build underground, or build up, or build to the side, we just don't have enough room to do much of anything, and I wish we did.

She sadly closed the thought by saying that as a result of facilities, "Um, cause you know right now it's just, no one is getting enough out of it." So, for Melissa, her negative view of the facilities situation played a prominent role in her view of the Department's available performance opportunities. As a result, this then affected her understanding of the results of the Performing Arts music major.

However, Donald and Carter were much more veiled in their view of the facilities. While more of a shot at humor, Donald echoed the office space situation with his lighthearted jab at me regarding my shared office in the Brooks Center when he joked that "maybe one day you'll have your own office." For Donald, other factors play a heavier role in determining how

he ultimately viewed the pros and cons of the major. The same goes for Carter. While he demonstrated that he thinks space and facilities are issues, for him, it did not negatively color his perceptions of the program. So while Carter doesn't see growth of the program as possible because "at this point I don't think it's possible just because we don't have the space" he isn't necessarily framing that negatively. In fact, growth for him could adversely affect what he referred to time and time again as a positive hallmark of the Department. "Um, well I guess the family aspect really lends itself well to the department because we're such a small program." So, while evident for both Carter and Donald, the issue of facilities was not as determining a factor as it was for Melissa and Felicity. Their larger views of pros and cons that influenced their understanding of opportunities and results were shaped elsewhere.

For Felicity, however, the Brooks Center and Department of Performing Arts facilities were never a negative point of contention. While most of her comments were in relation to Department facilities being an important factor in her College Choice as discussed at length earlier, she also spoke highly of the facilities throughout the conversation. "So, you had all these like elements right there." "When you go to learn about the different stages, you walk through those two stages." While also a factor in her college decision making process, Felicity still loved that the Brooks Center was "a part of the academic setting." Felicity did not view the facilities negatively like Melissa, with indifferent humor like Donald, or with resigned understanding like Carter. Instead, the facilities were a source of pride; pride in the University, the Department, and the Performing Arts music major. As a result, her positive outlook on facilities positively affects her understanding of opportunities and results.

So while the initial professional atmosphere and aura of the Brooks Center was not necessarily a deciding factor in the college selection process of Melissa, Donald, and Carter like



it was for Felicity, it was a contributing factor in forming each of their Pros and Cons regarding the Major.

**Connections.** Each of the participants discussed connections made throughout their time in the program. However, each of them spoke of connections quite differently. Felicity, Melissa, and Donald all spoke of connections made with Performing Arts faculty and staff. Melissa even went on to discuss connections made with some of the guest artists that performed at the Brooks Center and spoken to or worked with the Performing Arts students. Carter and Felicity both referenced connections made and strengthened with their peers in various performing ensembles. James spoke little about external connections with outside artists, but he positively quote professors and speak about connection building activities. Unlike many of the other theme and sub-theme areas, all of the participants spoke of their connections gained through their time in the program rather positively.

Felicity spoke of her connections gained during her time as a Performing Arts student in music at Clemson in two very different, yet equally positive, ways. While disappointed about the lack of a Classical style performing outlet and with the limitations placed on the degree by facilities, she did gain valuable connections with both fellow students and with Department and University faculty and staff. Felicity mentioned her relationships with other students throughout our conversation and always in glowing terms. During her time in the Department's performing ensembles, Felicity met friends who "were my best friends, and um, I still keep up with them today even though they've graduated." She went on to discuss members of her ensemble that:

they just really kind of put me under their wings, and if I ever had problems or needed a ride, they were always looking out after me. We would do like dinners together and what not so I just think it was like, like I said like a family.

In addition to providing a link between the expectations, college choice, and pros and cons thematic areas, this is also important to Felicity's personal narrative. Given the family tradition importance in her own background, this is important in shaping her larger view of the program. She eloquently states that "So, I think the camaraderie with music involved intertwined definitely connected us." For Felicity, the intense preparation, rehearsal, and performance schedule of the ensembles "really made us all connected to each other, and really kind of just made us, um, more, we bonded." Ultimately, these connections forged and maintained throughout her time in the program, even as many have graduated and moved on, provided an important and positive link to her expectations from the beginning. "The people I met were incredible and really helped shape my Clemson experience for sure."

However, Felicity also spoke about her connections with Department and University staff. She consistently used the term "network" to refer to how she had been able to use and maintain important connections throughout the University. She talked about jobs gained, experiences had, and connections strengthened due to a liberal arts degree program that offered enough flexibility to allow for these "networks."

It's all about who you know, and so, like I was saying, liberal arts has a network that you can make here, and so I feel like I've really networked my through the university and what it can offer students.

During her time at Clemson, Felicity has worked with several high-ranking institutional officers and has served on several influential committees. Felicity even spoke about how this has helped her professional growth. "He knew my face from speaking at those events, so those three men knew who I was, and Bam! I got a good job." In her experience in the program, Felicity was able to develop positive connections through a network that will continue to serve her in the

future. For Felicity, these connections served as a positive aspect of the Performing Arts in music experience at Clemson University and therefore affected her larger view of its results. To sum up her ideas, “And so, that’s the beauty is, the liberal arts of Clemson is a network and you can certainly use it to your advantage. And, um, I’ve been able to do that while here.”

While not discussed nearly as in-depth, Melissa’s story is equally important to influencing her larger view of the results of the program. Unlike Felicity, Melissa’s discussion of connections was mostly isolated in the interview and focused on connections made with faculty and staff and then with outside artists. So, while lacking the overt or explicit elaboration of Felicity’s story, Melissa voluntarily brought up the importance of the fact that she had developed connections with many of the Department’s faculty and staff. She openly acknowledged that “and like just making connections here, um is how I got the” internship she wanted and needed for her career development. She went on to reference how important it was having someone in the Department willing to “um you know make a phone call over there” and having others willing to “to write a letter of recommendation.” While the identity of the recommenders and the location of the internship are being intentionally withheld in order to protect the identity of the participant, these fragments illustrate the importance prescribed to these connections. Melissa also brought up how she even had Brooks Center staff speaking to guest artists on her behalf regarding possible post-graduate opportunities. Quoting a staff member regarding the recommendation to a professional artist, Melissa excitedly recounted “but she was just like you would be you know great for this sort of thing, because you know what artists want.” So, while a comparatively small portion of the larger conversation, the examples of faculty and staff connections and possibilities with outside artists represented a pro for the Department and the Performing Arts music major for Melissa.

While an equally small aspect of his larger narrative, Donald echoed Melissa's understanding of the importance of developing important connections in the program. Donald was quick to point out that, unlike Melissa, he did not develop any contacts, connections, or relationships with outside performing artists.

I didn't develop that many communications or that many relationships with outside people coming to visit, um mainly because I wasn't as interested in in what they were pitching to me and what their career was as some of the other people might have been. However, despite the lack of interest, Donald independently referenced how the Department was actively trying to instill an atmosphere of connections and relationships.

The one constant that they kept reinforcing with us is that the connections that you build with people is the most important thing. It isn't as much how you do, or what you do, as long as you know what you're doing, your connections are the most important thing you develop with people.

Donald was also quick to recognize that the Department provided opportunities to make connections with professionals from a wide range of specialties and jobs.

Ok, we had technical directors, and we had dances, we had musical performers, we had um, a person come in and play (musical specialty removed), which that was interesting, I liked that. Um, we've had agents who've worked for actors, and things like that, recording artists, we've had recording artists, and actors, and so a wide range of disciplines.

Ultimately, for Donald, those were simply not his interests. However, despite not necessarily connecting with or developing relationships with any of the guest artists and performers, Donald readily admitted that he did begin positive relationships with many Performing Arts faculty and

staff. “But I did develop good relationships with some of the faculty here, and I feel like those relationships can grow and continue throughout my life and you know, after college, things like that.” Like the others, Donald’s ultimate view of the results of the program was positively influenced by the connections forged.

Carter’s discussion of connections focused solely on relationships gained and maintained through performing ensembles and performing experiences. In fact, as Carter entered Clemson University without a declared major, it was a connection in the major that attracted his initial interest in the program.

Um, I came in undeclared, and was like well don’t really know what I’m gonna do, and I was looking at different majors, and I have a friend in Tiger Band who was a Performing Arts major, and he was telling me about everything, and I was like, wow that’s really cool, and then the more I thought about it, the more I realized I couldn’t do anything that wasn’t in the field of Performing Arts. Like, I can’t imagine myself doing anything else for the rest of my life.

So, while he never explicitly mentioned important faculty relationships or connections made with outside artists, like Felicity, Carter consistently referenced the importance of the camaraderie developed within the performing ensembles. “It’s just the um, group itself. Cause I mean you spend so much time with these people.” Carter went on to demonstrate the importance of connections and illustrated the relationship between expectations and pros and cons. “I mean of course everyone talks about the Clemson family, and within that, you have your many other families.” In fact, he jokingly said that with this atmosphere, there were “just families everywhere.” Again, while not explicitly stating the importance of connections, Carter brought up his own intra-ensemble relationships throughout the interview. This is coupled with his own

understanding of the Clemson family atmosphere and his own Clemson family tradition to form what is a definitive pro for the Performing Arts music major. This therefore influenced his view of the results of the major. Carter gave the practical explanation of Donald's statement about how the Department emphasized the importance of connections.

You just have to spend so much time alongside of these people that you, I don't want to say are forced, but I guess for lack of a better word, you're kind of forced to get to along with these people, and just um, get to know them as well as you can, you uh, just spend so much time with them.

Phrased and framed as a positive of the Department, "Um, everyone in this department just spends so much time together anyway and you'll find that a lot of people in this department end up living together after like freshmen and sophomore year. Just can't seem to escape anyone."

James' focus throughout our conversation was largely on musical discussion and preparation. Instead of focusing on connections and collaborations as literally as the others, James spoke of performing techniques and events that shaped his view of growth and results. While he never referenced any connection with either faculty or an outside performing artist, James does tell musical stories concerning both. Throughout the interview, James often recited quotes from his major professor on performance techniques and musical styles. As these quotes would clearly identify James' performing area, they unfortunately cannot be replicated here. While not explicit, beginning these quotes by saying "actually just recently my professor told me this uh this nice little quote," James demonstrated the importance of this connection. Like Carter, James also gave practical expression to Donald's assertion that the Department constantly advocated for the importance of connections. While once again, as the conversation focused more on musical specifics, techniques, and styles, James briefly mentioned the time spent

together that Carter detailed. James specifically referred to the Performing Arts practicum that gave the students opportunities to work in fields throughout the three concentrations.

“Performing arts practicum, where that is, you have to for 45 hours a semester work in different areas of the Brooks Center.” While not a major part of our conversation, this does lend a degree of credence to the connections comments of the others. However, as effectively neutral statements, James’ understanding of the connections gained in the program do not affect his view of results in any significant way.

For each of the participants, connections emerged as an identifiable aspect of their view of the pros and cons of the Performing Arts major. However, each of them discussed and therefore defined these connections in their own way. So while Felicity, Melissa, and Donald made very specific comments on connections gained during their time in the program, and Carter and James’ comments were more deeply embedded in the conversation, they all had connections affect their larger view of the program and their larger view of its results.

**Faculty Experiences.** In the pros and cons thematic area, the issue of faculty relationships and faculty buy-in were brought up in the narratives of all five of the participants. While some of the participants viewed their experiences with the Performing Arts faculty and staff positively, others saw it much differently. Either way, these perceptions of faculty buy-in and dedication to students played a role in the opportunities that the participants took advantage of, how they viewed those opportunities, and what they saw as the results of the program.

Carter spoke of the faculty and his relationships with them in the most positive manner of the group of participants. He talked glowingly of a multitude of faculty members, and was even quick to praise staff and administration throughout the conversation. He praised the director of one of his performing ensembles saying that the music that they have “had us play has been,

amazing.” He went on to refer to faculty members as being “like parents-ish.” The importance of this statement is heightened given Carter’s own family background with Clemson University and his own desire to attend an institution with that very family atmosphere. So, for Carter these words represented a strong positive for the program and its faculty. When discussing faculty dedication to students in the program, Carter mentioned that “like we’ve seen them shed a few tears.” In reference to dedication to the program, “And, um, like professors are always there alongside you,” and “They’re there just as long as you are, maybe even longer, and it just shows you how much they really care.” So for Carter, his experiences with faculty and staff were positive and in no way reflected a faculty that is not fully dedicated to Performing Arts music students or the program in general.

James essentially mirrored this sentiment. While not as explicit as Carter, he never criticized faculty or staff, and in spots referred to their role in the department quite favorably. In addition to the faculty connections mentioned in the prior sub-theme area (connections), James also spoke of the musical skill of the music faculty. In reference to his experience in one of the Department’s performing ensembles, James lauds the musical understanding and selection. “Like, all in general, the music that he chooses is usually very exciting.” He also recounts a story involving the Department’s senior project requirement where he and his group were able to approach faculty and staff members with questions and for guidance. While the senior project will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter, this story demonstrated a level of comfort with the faculty to utilize them as a resource. “And so, what we did was that uh, we, we talked to uh, (faculty/staff/administration member).” This, coupled with his connections developed with his major professor paint a picture of comfort with the Performing Arts music faculty, staff, and administration that influenced his view of opportunities and therefore his results.



While not a major aspect of the conversation, Donald spoke of multiple faculty relationships developed throughout the interview. As mentioned earlier, he was quick to mention that during his time as a Performing Arts music major, he did create some important faculty relationships that he felt would continue to develop. “But I did develop good relationships with some of the faculty here, and I feel like those relationships can grow and continue throughout my life and you know, after college, things like that.” He also told a story about a lesson experience with a faculty relationship that to him started off “shaky.”

Mostly it’s been a great experience. Uh, it was shaky at first because it was um, it was like, wow, ok, I wasn’t, you don’t know what to expect when you’re coming into you know college in a music, in a music type degree.

However, despite this initial shakiness, he viewed the experience with the faculty member as largely positive. In fact, he continued to say how this shakiness was based upon the faculty member’s expectation of practice and dedication that ultimately improved his own motivation.

Cause there was times when I didn’t practice hardly at all for a week, and then I would get in a lesson and he would, you know he would be disappointed, and be like, what are you doing here?

In his mind, he was able to use this constructively. “I took it the right way I think. You know, I could understand how some people would, would back away from that, and that might be good to weed out people who really aren’t serious about it.” This experience also shaped his experience and “and tested who I was I think.” However, Donald also tells a story where a miscommunication with a faculty member caused him to fail a course. Ultimately, the faculty member “never sent out any emails or anything and at the end of the semester, I got an F on my report card, I’m like, what is that?” With this miscommunication, “So, right away my GPA shot

down to begin with.” As a result, I asked whether he felt like he was lost in the shuffle of a program with multiple concentrations. Succinct like most of his responses, Donald replied, “yea, I felt like, why wouldn’t he have said something?” Simply put, “so, I felt like I, the communication wasn’t there.” Despite this difficulty, Donald was not prepared to assign blame or even label communication as a Department wide epidemic. He responded that “but um, I don’t think that it would be a departmental problem. I think that it might have just been isolated. You know everyone makes mistakes.” Donald understood that things happened and in his typical concise manner signaled the end of the story with “so, I’m not really putting anything on him about it. It’s just. It happened.”

While Melissa’s story contained positive comments regarding the Performing Arts music faculty like the others, it also contained some intense criticisms of faculty dedication to students. While not framed in an overly negative or judgmental manner, her view of the faculty had an influence on how she viewed the opportunities presented and the results of the program. Initially, Melissa was quick to specifically reference some of the faculty members that had been particularly helpful. She recognized various faculty, staff, and administration members that had been helpful along the way in both musical development and navigating the program. In reference to a particular Department employee, she mentioned that “he’s very willing to help and get, get these things done.” As far as musical development she discussed a faculty member that has been particularly helpful in creating a context for her learning and for connecting assignments to practical objectives and outcomes. “But it’s nice to know how this can be applied and how this can inform your, your learning and how this can improve your own performance if you understand.” However, these positive experiences were isolated to specific examples. The majority of Melissa’s comments showed a different view of the faculty in the Department. One

prevalent thread throughout our conversation revealed a faculty that was preoccupied with other responsibilities and unwilling or unable to dedicate what she saw as the necessary amount of time and effort to student success. During a particular story regarding a faculty member experience, Melissa concluded that there is just not enough focus on student learning through faculty teaching.

And it's just, I don't think it's enough focus, just like if you're a teacher, be a teacher, you know, that's my only thing. And it's kinda like, umm, not, you know, I just need more focus from you.

She would later echo this idea with the more concise statement that “just professors not being, I guess not being on top of what their students need.” Also, while she earlier mentioned specific instances of faculty, staff, or administration members being very willing and able to help, she also gave specific instances where they were not. In reference to a particular faculty member she felt that “I don't really get the impression that (faculty/staff/administration member) would go out of his way to help me.” She continued this idea with the understanding that “it really just depends on who you talk to.” Following these stories, my question of whether she personally felt that student's needs are not being met by the faculty, staff, and administration, she replied, “um, yea, oh definitely.” She continued to tell stories of intimidating classroom experiences where she felt uncomfortable asking questions or approaching the instructor.

But it was also kind of I didn't feel like I could ask questions, cause it was kind of like you should know this already, like I've already explained it, but I was like, you didn't really explain it in a way that I understand.

Asked to discuss whether the Performing Arts music faculty, staff, and administration were overall helpful, Melissa responded, “um, it kind of.” While Melissa did have some positive

faculty, staff, and administration experiences, it also contains stories of intimidation, lack of focus on student needs, and a lack of willingness to help. These thoughts, combined with other pros and cons from this thematic area, helped to shape her view of the Department's opportunities, and the ultimate results.

Felicity identified similar issues to Melissa. Like Melissa, she too isolated stories of helpful, energetic, and focused members of the faculty, staff, and administration. She referenced an early audition experience that both influenced her decision to attend Clemson University and major in Performing Arts and would shape her view of the program going forward.

Um, when I came to, um, the audition they were so friendly they made me feeling welcome, they made me feel important, they made me want to stay. And, um, I remember (faculty, staff, or administration member) at the time was like, you know what you've got a lot of potential; we absolutely want you.

The fact that they were "willing to invest in me" "I think really made me commit right away to Clemson." This early experience was supplemented by relationships created and developed with other faculty, staff, and administration through coursework, internships, and committees. These positive opportunities and experiences gave her a chance "to kind of learn by experience" and were helpful to her overall development. "Clemson is a network and you can certainly use it to your advantage. And, um, I've been able to do that while here." She continued on to talk about the importance of the faculty to her Clemson Performing Arts experience in a very positive manner.

The Performing Arts is small and so I knew my professors, they knew me, so if something's going wrong, they understood, look she's not acting out, she's having a hard

time, or, you know, they could see the potential and would willingly send you information on internships or write you letters of recommendations.

However, like Melissa, Felicity also pointed out that while these wonderful experiences with dedicated faculty were important to her own personal growth, she had negative experiences as well. When asked whether she felt supported by the faculty, staff, and administration overall, Felicity replied, “um, it’s hit or miss.” Much like Melissa’s intimidating course atmosphere, Felicity also experienced “harsh” academic and musical environments where faculty, staff, and administration lacked “finesse in addressing students.” In many respects, she was left feeling that in certain instances, “I just don’t feel like they really cared about me as an individual.” Given this, Felicity reached a similar conclusion to Melissa that “but as an educator your role is to put your students first.” However, her most strongly voiced concern in the interview was that while some faculty, staff, and administration serve as a strength for the University, Department, and music major, others do not. In fact, to her mind, there are Performing Arts faculty who serve as poor ambassadors and representatives. “I don’t feel like they represent performing arts well, I don’t feel like they are an asset to our major.” This is enforced by a feeling that some faculty do not buy into the Performing Arts music model and therefore do not represent the major properly or in the most positive light.

And when they spoke about the performing arts major they were like, “well it’s not a Bachelor of Music degree so if you want to do performance, maybe it’s not the best school, but you know we have arts administration and all this other experience you can get.” And I’m like, come on you’re not even like enthused about like what we’re doing.”

As a result, Felicity was left feeling insulted because “it’s kind of like well you don’t even believe in what we do.” While her faculty, staff, and administration experiences were not completely negative, these experiences do adversely cloud her early positive experiences.

For each of the participants, faculty relationships served as an important component in forming their understanding of the pros and cons of the degree program. To varying degrees, these experiences shaped their pros and cons that went on to inform their view of the Department opportunities they were involved in, and the ultimate results of the program for them.

**Opportunities.** The idea of available opportunities was a sub-theme area that was seen to varying degrees throughout the narratives of all of the participants. Depending upon their view of earlier pros and cons, each participant viewed the experiences and opportunities available to them differently.

Carter and Felicity both spoke at great length about all of the various courses, ensembles, and opportunities they were able to take part in. While never specifically referencing their importance to their larger view of the program, they do add that they enjoyed this wide range of courses in music, theatre, and audio technology. This range of opportunities helped shape their ultimate views of the results gained from the program. Carter stated that:

I loved just finding out what I could do. I figure leaving here, it makes me a little bit more marketable, and I can say, hey I’ve done this and I’ve done that, so I’m not completely ignorant, I know what I’m doing.

He continued to reiterate how he enjoyed the fact that he was able to be involved in so many different segments of the arts. “But also that you weren’t confined to just your concentration, like that you get to do everything, working in theatre, audio, and just getting a feel for everything the performing arts field has to offer.” By not being “confined” Carter believed he earned a

marketability was the result of the opportunities afforded him in the program. This would later shape his larger view of the results of the program. Felicity's statements agreed that the wide range of opportunities were an important aspect of the Performing Arts degree. "You have so many other options, so many other doors." Felicity went on to echo Carter's language of marketability. "And also, just kind of gives me a more diverse background and it makes me that much more marketable, um upon graduation." Felicity explained that getting these range of opportunities was important to her from the beginning in her college choice, and that in her view, Clemson had largely succeeded in giving her the well-rounded experience she was looking for.

And so, I wanted, I wanted a degree that made me well-rounded, gave me options, and really developed me as an, in my academia, and Clemson allowed me to succeed in all of those aspects, and actually has given me other opportunities to succeed and explore all these other different realms, um, with music and without.

So for Felicity, these positive experiences with the range of opportunities was important to developing her larger view of the program.

James and Donald also discussed a range of ensembles, experiences, and courses, but not in an attempt to suggest that these opportunities helped to shape their views of the program or influenced their results from it. Instead, the discussions of their experiences were more focused on the specifics of the opportunities themselves. As a result, their specifics and details will be covered in the following major thematic area (Opportunities).

Melissa, however, saw the opportunities in the program as a negative. While she also discussed a range of courses and experiences to be discussed in the next thematic area, her primary focus was on performing opportunities. Largely as a result of facilities and limited personnel, she found the performing opportunities to be sparse and a definite negative aspect of

the program. She found that during her time in the program, “like there’s not a whole lot of opportunity, but that’s kinda because we don’t have a lot of people.” Other statements littered throughout the conversation kept reinforcing this principle idea of lack of performance opportunities. “There’s not that many opportunities to perform,” and “It’s just uh, not a lot of opportunity” each illustrated her strongly held and often repeated point. To further substantiate her observation, she also told of opportunities she has had outside of the classroom walls of the Department and Brooks Center. Referring to faculty, she said that, “there’s not a lot of opportunities here, um but they are good about providing outside opportunities.” As a performer from an intensive and performance-based preparatory program, this represented a strong negative part of the Performing Arts music program at Clemson University for Melissa. As a result, this lead to Melissa’s disappointing realization that despite her musical background, following her time in the program, “I don’t think most of us are going to come out at least musicians and actually be a performer.”

Each of the participants discussed opportunities differently. For Carter, Felicity, and Melissa the opportunities had a direct influence on how they felt about the program and its relationship to results. While James and Donald discussed the opportunities it was not explicitly as a means to value the program either positively or negatively. This further linked the pros and cons thematic area to the next major theme of opportunities.

**Rigor.** The issue of rigor was only brought up by Melissa in the interview. So while a very limited and specific sub-theme area, it was very important to her understanding of the program and her subsequent view of it.

With her background in the intense conservatory style preparatory program, Melissa very quickly pointed out that her high school performance training was very demanding. In fact, she



went as far as to say that “it was actually a lot more rigorous than it was here.” She continued to discuss in more detail the performance practices, techniques, and preparation.

You know honestly, coming from the (preparatory program), where you know that, that fire under your pants, like you know that motivation, and a little bit of fear to like you know, motivate you, at least for me, that is the kind of motivation that I need, you know like have that anticipation that at any moment I could be asked to perform. Here, not so much.

With her background in performance, interest in Classical style techniques and styles, and desire for a rigorous training program, Melissa viewed this as a severe limitation of the program. She referenced courses that were simply an easy A. “I was like, yea sure if you want to give me an easy A.” Melissa also referenced a story from her high school program that influenced her drive and motivation for performance.

So I literally got called out and was like sent to the practice room to go practice, first time I almost cried in class. But it was great, it was terrifying, but it was good because it kind of you know set a fire under your pants to go practice, it was a little bit of that, kinda, I don’t want to say fear tactics, but it was good to have that push to keep you on your toes. She told this story to compare the techniques and intensity to what she referred to multiple times as a “hand-holdy” and “coddly” performance atmosphere in the Department of Performing Arts music program. At multiple times she said about the program that, “um, it’s kinda, it’s a little coddly” and “It kinda feels a little hand-holdy at times, you know?” For Melissa, her Classical and performing expectations of the program led to a perceived negative or con of the Performing Arts music program. This, in turn, affected her view of the ultimate results.

For each of the individual stories of the participants, different sub-theme issues were of primary importance. However, each of these pros and cons identified through analysis had an effect on how the subsequent major thematic areas would be understood by each of the participants. The expectations of the participants were closely linked with their college choice. These, along with their individual expectations helped form what they each saw as pros and cons of the major in the “it’s kind of like pros and cons” section. These positives and negatives affected how they viewed their opportunities which in turn influenced their results from the program.

### **Opportunities**

Based upon what they regarded as the pros and cons of the major, each of the participants therefore understood the opportunities available to them differently. The way that they viewed and interpreted these Opportunities ultimately bore a relationship to their view of the ultimate results they saw from the program. In order to better describe this larger thematic section of opportunities, this section will cover the sub-themes of the senior project, senior recital, and coursework diversity.

**Senior Project.** The senior project is an intentionally collaborative part of the PA 401 curriculum and is designed to be taken during the student’s final year in the program. During the course of the interviews, this PA 401 Senior Project was voluntarily brought up by Carter, James, and Melissa and went unmentioned by Donald and Felicity. James defined the project as “Uh, I mean the senior project is something that you come up with your group by yourselves and it has to uh, somehow uh benefit the performing arts as a whole and the surrounding area around Clemson.” This community benefit is echoed by Carter. “That was one of the main things, as we had to have some aspect of community outreach in our um, project.” Carter continued on to

describe the collaborative nature of the project. “Uh, well I mean, definitely my senior project in PA 401, uh, because, I mean you can’t get any more collaborative than it was.”

Carter spoke the most at length regarding his experiences with the Senior Project. Carter worked in a project group that represented all of the Performing Arts concentrations, music, theatre, and audio technology. “So we had all three concentrations in one group.” He then went on to say that this was encouraged, but not required of the project. “They suggest that you do that, but they at least want you to encompass two of the concentrations. So, um we had all three.” Carter continued to excitedly talk about their project and how they were able to put it all together with a group that, while diverse in terms of concentration, was thankfully all musically inclined. “But thankfully all of us were musically inclined, so we decided we wanted to go down that path.” This became important to their project as he proudly concluded that, “And, uh, being musicians, we were like, well we can pull this off.” As he discussed what he saw as an innovative and creative project idea, he is clear that this group of musicians did not want to do one of the traditional projects. “Um, and a lot of 401 projects they host events, or do workshops for kids, or do a concert or something, or they go and visit the nursing home and play for the, um residents there.” Instead, “But, we decided we wanted to go down a different path.” In a continued effort to maintain the confidentiality of all participants, details and specifics about the project will not be discussed. However, Carter continued on at length regarding the project, its benefits, and its challenges. In traversing these various challenges, Carter continued to discuss the intricacy involved in completing the project. “Um, so yea, we just had, everything about that project was um, was very, it was very involved.” Ultimately, he concluded that it was this high level of what he referred to as involvement that made the project helpful and worthwhile. “Uh, it was a very very involved process, but ultimately, I mean, it was very eye opening uh just the

various processes you have to take to do some of these things. Very enriching experience.”

Following this description of their project, when asked how this project reflected the Department, Carter responded quite positively.

I would think it's very reflective. Um, for one, we have people from all of the concentrations. Um, and though we didn't include as much theatrical stuff as some of the other groups, um of course including music and audio, uh, we, um, lost my train of thought, (laughter)um, I mean it's very representative of the department. We are using our strengths to our advantage and even dabbling into some of the things we aren't, weren't as comfortable with, and just getting ourselves out there and representing the university and the department as best as we could.

Carter's view of this opportunity would go on to positively affect his larger view of the results from the program.

James also spoke positively of the Senior Project. While his discussion was perhaps not as effusive as Carter's, James still discussed some positives gained from the project. For James, the PA 401 project was brought up on his own to a broad question towards the very end of the interview asking if there were any other experiences in the program that he found important. He then immediately jumped into a detailed discussion of his group's project. He began, “Well, I think, a nice experience that we had was just doing our past senior project.” Following the description of the project, James proudly mentioned that in his opinion the project was effective and was a positive experience for their target audience. “And so, I think it's just a hundred percent beneficial to them.” “Yep. Mmmhmm, they loved it.” Like, Carter, James also described the composition of the group in terms of a collaborative effort between concentrations.

I guess that was the uh department's attempt of collaborating with your fellow

performers, uh, yea, I mean because in our group it turned out that we had one music major, one audio technology concentration, and one uh theatre concentration, so, yea.

He continued to say that:

When you're choosing uh your group members, uh it is required that you have at least one different concentration in there and just when we chose our group members it just turned out that yea, we had one representing each.

In addition to the level of detail in which he described it, the fact that this PA 401 Senior Project was voluntarily brought up, this "nice experience" for James certainly represented a positive understanding of this opportunity.

Melissa was the third and final participant that referenced the Senior Project, but in a far less complimentary manner. While she was clear and explicit that there were many aspects that she enjoyed and found helpful in the PA courses (401 included), she also found some of the courses and project unnecessary. "Let's stop doing these things that are like a waste of my time, like the PA classes, I don't feel like those are very beneficial." She did, however, find projects and experiences in resume building, grant writing, and interviewing skills to be helpful. About these specific projects and experiences, "That's just kind of a real world thing, I think it's funny that, that they teach that. Um, and in that regard, I think that's beneficial." However, the PA 401 Senior Project was one of the items she found to be unnecessary. "I, the senior project thing, I don't think is really that beneficial." She continued to reiterate that "I don't know if it's all that, you know I don't really see the point in it." However, Melissa did intentionally point that there were many aspects of the PA classes that were important and influential and that it was just a matter of the fact that "I think that could be one class instead of, um, you know all four years." In the end, the senior project was not an overall positive opportunity.

**Senior Recital.** While they each discussed opportunities in their experiences in the Performing Arts music program at Clemson University, Donald, James, and Carter each referenced their Senior Recitals. To varying degrees they each talked about how this performing event was the culmination of their learning or an influence on their experience.

Donald spoke thoroughly about his senior recital experience, which took place prior to the semester we spoke. In fact, when he brought up his recital, Donald freely offered up a copy of the program for me to view. In addition to providing important data source triangulation, this also provided insight and verification of the pieces he spoke of in our conversation. “I could, I could show you what my program was.” Donald viewed this senior recital as the culmination of all of the private lesson work he had put in during his time in the program. “Um and the senior recital which was a compilation of all the works I’ve been working on in my lessons.” Important to shaping his view of the recital and lesson experience in the Department was his feeling that he was always prepared for recitals along the way, and especially this capstone recital at the end.

Yes, I did, I always felt prepared. I, at first the piece looked like it was way too complex for me, and then we broke it down and I worked on it throughout the semester, and then when it came jury time, I was ready, and I played it, and I felt good about it.

As a result of this perceived level of preparation, Donald received positive remarks and comments regarding his playing. Again, this positivity regarding his playing is an important component to shaping his view of the program and the results from it. “Yea, and I always got good responses, good remarks about my work, so that was also motivating to keep going.” It was for these reasons that a musical program where, “It was, I played about 5 or 6 pieces” would end up as such an overall positive opportunity. “Um, the senior recital was also a good experience. I felt like I pushed that to the max of what I could do and that was a good thing.”

During an interview where Carter spoke at great length about other aspects of his Performing Arts experience, including the senior project, Carter strangely mentioned his senior recital only once. This is more unique given that it was to be performed the day after our conversation. However, overtures at continuing the thought ultimately were passed over for discussions regarding more ensemble experiences. His initial comment was that, “Yes, yea, uh my senior recital is in, tomorrow.” After wishing him the best of luck, I asked if he felt prepared. His response was a brief, “Yep, ready to get it over with for one thing.” However, given Carter’s interest in ensemble musical experiences as a result of his musical experiences before Clemson, his desire to be involved in family ensemble atmospheres, and his level of interest in collaborative projects such as the senior project, not mentioning or elaborating on a solo senior recital no longer is unusual. Even on the eve of the performance, his statement of being ready to “get it over with” was not made with hostility towards the assignment, fear of the performance, or with any sort of annoyance or displeasure with the Department. In fact, as further evidence of positive rapport, I acknowledged that I understood what he meant immediately. Therefore, for Carter, the lack of commentary on the senior recital, was more about sustaining the connections between the thematic areas of expectations, college choice, “it’s like pros and cons,” and opportunities than it was about an indictment of the senior recital component.

James also spoke about the Senior Recital experience, but in a considerably different manner. Initially, James mentioned that the recital was important. “Uhh. I mean like my senior recital stands out.” Ultimately though, James used his Senior Recital experience to explain musical techniques or styles. The most evident example of this was his mention of his senior recital during an explanation of the importance of music theory and knowledge of the piano.

Like so many of his other descriptions, his understanding of the recital process was couched in the technical language of music and was a part of his desire to be a “complete” musician.

So, theory comes into large play with piano and of course, uh, I just had my senior recital and I had to have a piano accompaniment, so, when I was asking her to do certain things, being familiar with the piano is also crucial.

He continued on to explain the level of interpretive ability he has gained during his time in the program while using the Senior Recital as the example to prove this.

Uh, well like I said earlier it’s uh, especially now with my interpretation of music, um when I first came here, I really learned the music for what it was, like I would not go anywhere outside of the lines, I would not, like if it only told me to play piano, I would not play pianissimo, if it told me to crescendo to forte, that’s as far as I would go, um, I would really stick to the tempos of the music, whereas right now, especially after doing my senior recital, um my interpretation of each piece is heard in the performance of it. So, it goes from somebody being from you reciting what’s on the page to you actually performing what’s on the page.

As a tool to describe his musical development, the senior recital was important to James during our conversation. This substantiated its role as a positive opportunity for James to display what he viewed as growth and development.

Although brought up and discussed in much different ways, the fact that it was brought up voluntarily by Donald, Carter, and James validated its inclusion as an important opportunity in the Performing Arts music program. It also helped to further understand the relationship between the thematic areas already discussed and will provide a final link to the results yet to come.



**Coursework Diversity.** Also related to this larger theme of opportunities was the idea of coursework diversity. As a Performing Arts program with concentrations in Theatre, Music, and Audio Technology, students took classes with members of the other concentrations as well as their own. These are intended to be collaborative experiences and to enrich the performing arts experience in an attempt to create a more well-rounded or versatile graduate.

Given his involvement with a wide range of performing arts activities in high school, Carter loved the diverse coursework that was a hallmark of a performing arts college education. My original question on the topic was whether there was anything in particular that drew him to a performing arts style program. He quickly responded that it was the diverse coursework that initially grabbed his attention.

Well I mean, one that it was in the arts, but also that you weren't confined to just your concentration, like that you get to do everything, working in theatre, audio, and just getting a feel for everything the performing arts field has to offer.

He then continued to reference specific experiences in the PA 279 class. In the class, the students were required to work a certain number of hours serving in practical performing arts activities. While he didn't participate in any audio technology specific activities, Carter did immediately bring up audio experiences he received from the program.

Spent many many hours in the scene shop, uh helping paint, take down, construction, everything you can imagine. Um, working in the costume shop, uh working box office, and ushering, um, well I don't know if any of my 279 hours actually went to working audio stuff, maybe with some of the like rigging for different shows, but um, taking some of the audio classes, and learning all about that, um, that was definitely eye opening, because prior to coming here, I didn't know anything about the field of audio, because I

had done theatre in high school, and of course music forever, but I didn't really know anything about audio.

For Carter, this “just all encompassing” degree program allowed him to remain involved in everything. “Um, I mean, I just liked how you were able to get yourself involved in everything in the field.” Carter continued to reiterate the fact that he enjoyed the comprehensive course diversity in the program. “But uh, I, I just really liked the fact that you weren't confined to your specific concentration and that you were allowed to dabble in everything else.” However, Carter also importantly viewed this coursework diversity as important to his future marketability.

Yea. I mean, I loved just finding out what I could cause I figure leaving here, it makes me a little bit more marketable, and I can say, hey I've done this and I've done that, so I'm not completely ignorant, I know what I'm doing.

While this marketability aspect will be discussed in greater length later in this chapter, it did illustrate the importance that Carter prescribed to the opportunity to participate in diverse coursework in the Performing Arts music program at Clemson University.

Donald saw the diverse coursework a little differently. With the interest in music theory and performing ensembles coupled with his music camp experiences, Donald viewed the forays into the other concentrations as unnecessary. Also, coupled with the expectations discussed earlier, Donald understood that the program would be comprehensive and would contain aspects of theatre and audio technology in addition to music, but also thought that maybe this would mean the music requirements might be less rigorous. “Clemson had this Performing Arts program which was a little bit of everything music and art, or music and theatre, and audio. And I was thinking, ok maybe that wouldn't be as intense as a music degree.” While this perceived lack of rigor, for Donald, turned out to not be the case as discussed earlier in the “it's kind of like

pros and cons” thematic section, ultimately, he just didn’t enjoy the other concentrations. Also referencing the PA 279 course along with PA 280, Donald explained that other than required classes and internship hours in the other concentrations, he didn’t actively choose to involve himself in any other theatre or audio technology experiences. “I didn’t really do anything much past that um, besides doing the, working at the Brooks Center, the PA 280, 279 classes.” In the end, as he discussed an interest in furthering his education in a more traditional music graduate program, Donald succinctly summed up his experience with this diverse coursework by saying that:

There’s things in performing arts that I like and don’t like. So, the things that I like are all in the music area, and the things that I don’t like are all out of the music area. So I feel like, if I don’t like the other parts of it, then why am I, yea why would I go back and do it?

More like Carter, Felicity also discussed how the diverse coursework built into the Performing Arts curriculum was beneficial to her growth and development as a musician and student. She began by mentioning how music and theatre students took a general survey style appreciation course about the other field. “Um, so beginning off with Gen-ed you have to take a theatre appreciation class, and so and it goes opposite, theatre students have to take music appreciation to kind of develop that well-roundedness.” She went on to describe these experiences in her own words and articulated how they combine to give her a more complete musical understanding.

Um, yea, oh, and I’ve also taken audio classes, so I know how to record or use MIDI, to create instruments or vocal backtrack to me, so I think that’s really important too. So that experience let me know that I could be successful, um, in recording or whatnot, and then

I've also done a performance based class, um which is just a new performance every two weeks, which was a challenge, but really fun. So I would say those classes kind of really brought in my respect for music and let me know that music isn't just one emphasis, it's this world of experiences and connections, um, and the Performing Arts bachelor of arts really emphasizes how audio, music, and theatre can work together and they encourage our students to work with one another, and our, um program classes are based off that same idea I would say. So, I would say that I've been in class with many different Performing Arts majors and it really broadens your horizons and makes you a better musician.

James initially echoed the idea that in the Performing Arts music curriculum he has taken a number of classes in other fields. "I've taken music theory, some audio music classes, uh, a lot of performing classes, uh, performing arts practicum." However, unlike Carter and Felicity, he doesn't see it as a way to make him a more well-rounded, or in his words, a "complete" musician. So, while he acknowledged that it can certainly be helpful to have an understanding of what the other concentrations involve, he also pointed out that in the program, it is only a beginning.

Um, I mean like, it gives you somewhat of a background in order to understand how your fellow performers go about their ways, I mean otherwise I would never know exactly what uh theatre people or what audio people do, I would have no idea what audio people do.

But ultimately:

Like I said, it gives you a base to start on, if you want to understand it, you really need to go upon that yourself and maybe take more classes in there, but in order to understand it really, you need to major in those areas.

So, while this is far from a negative statement, James viewed these experiences outside of his own music concentration as being an introduction. Whereas Felicity found that it made her more well-rounded and Carter found this helped him to become more “competent” and “marketable,” James saw its importance in much more limited terms.

Lastly, Melissa saw the diverse coursework almost more as an inconvenience. In fact, the required courses outside of the music concentration, in her words, almost made the curriculum, “So, it’s very pigeon-hole.” In addition to her discussion earlier in this chapter regarding the possibility of condensing the Performing Arts core classes where she stated that, “I think that could be one class instead of, um, you know all four years,” she also failed to see the collaboration that was supposed to be at the heart of the diverse curriculum.

Um, well, um, not as much as they probably emphasize in PA 101 and 102 and all that, cause they kind of make it sound like you were going to collaborate with audio tech people, with theatre people, with other music people, from the very beginning, and it’s gonna be kinda like as part of your curriculum, it’s not, it’s really not, I have never worked with an audio person, um and I think that we should.

To varying degrees, each of the participants acknowledged and discussed the coursework diversity that was at the core of the Performing Arts style curriculum at Clemson University. The way that they engaged this diversity would ultimately affect the way that they viewed the opportunities in the program. This in turn affected their results of the program.

The sub-themes of the senior project, senior recital, and coursework diversity represented each of the participant's views on the experience of being a music concentration major in the Performing Arts program at Clemson University with regards to opportunities. The sense that each of them made of these opportunities came as a direct result of their expectations, college choice, and perceived pros and cons. The way that they each understood these opportunities then affected and influenced what they saw as the results of the program.

## **Results**

In the end, each of the prior thematic areas contributed to the participants forming for themselves what they viewed as their results from the program. In light of this, results are defined quite broadly in this section and are different for each of the participants. Depending upon their expectations going into the program, their reasons for choosing Clemson University and the Performing Arts program, what they saw as pros and cons of the major, and the way that they viewed the opportunities presented to them, their personal definitions of results varied. Despite this variance and individualization, during this section, sub-themes of connections, marketability, and preparedness properly encapsulate the manner in which the participants understood the results from the Performing Arts music program at Clemson University.

**Connections.** As discussed earlier in the "it's kind of like pros and cons" section of this chapter, connections emerged as an important sub-theme that came up in all of the interviews. This in turn affected the way that they each would view the major, its opportunities, and what they viewed as results. While they each spoke of connections developed throughout the major in strikingly different manners, each of them recognized a Departmental push to develop connections and relationships. They each also spoke of these connections in such a way that these connections developed were a result of the degree program.

As detailed earlier, Melissa was particularly critical of what she saw as a lack of opportunities and collaborative experiences in the Performing Arts music program. She made comments throughout the conversation regarding this perceived negative of the program. She stated that, “there’s not that many opportunities to perform.” She goes on to say that “it’s just uh, not a lot of opportunity.” Also as referenced earlier, “like there’s not a whole lot of opportunity, but that’s kinda because we don’t have a lot of people.” She was also critical of collaborative opportunities within the program.

Um, well, um, not as much as they probably emphasize in PA 101 and 102 and all that, cause they kind of make it sound like you were going to collaborate with audio tech people, with theatre people, with other music people, from the very beginning, and it’s gonna be kinda like as part of your curriculum, it’s not, it’s really not, I have never worked with an audio person, um and I think that we should.

Despite these critiques, Melissa did speak quite positively about connections, and in a manner that suggested these connections constituted a result of the program. She told the story of how she gained internships and opportunities through Department faculty and staff. She discussed how “making connections here” was helpful in furthering her career plans. She also mentioned the importance of having someone willing to “um you know make a phone call over there” or be willing “to write a letter of recommendation.” So despite Melissa’s belief that “I don’t think most of us are going to come out at least musicians and actually be a performer,” for her the connections developed throughout her time in the program constitute a positive result.

Felicity spoke the most at length about connections developed in the Performing Arts music program and at Clemson University in general. She acknowledged the fact that:

It's all about who you know, and so, like I was saying, liberal arts has a network that you can make here, and so I feel like I've really networked my through the university and what it can offer students.

For Felicity, this network included connections with student, faculty, and staff. Through the performing ensembles, she mentioned how the collaborations with fellow students had a lasting effect on her during her time at Clemson. In fact, many of the other members of the ensembles "were my best friends, and um, I still keep up with them today even though they've graduated." These personal and professional networks were influential for Felicity during her time at Clemson. These networks were instrumental for jobs and professional development where thanks to her connections, "Bam! I got a good job." However, they were also, important on broader and more personal levels and as a result of the Performing Arts music program for Felicity. "The people I met were incredible and really helped shape my Clemson experience for sure."

For Donald, his view of connections was almost strictly as a result and on a professional development level. While he readily admits that he did not develop any external relationships through guest artists or speakers, in his opinion he did gain positive relationships with faculty and staff. He saw these connections as having the possibility for growth and development.

I didn't develop that many communications or that many relationships with outside people coming to visit, um mainly because I wasn't as interested in in what they were pitching to me and what their career was as some of the other people might have been. But I did develop good relationships with some of the faculty here, and I feel like those relationships can grow and continue throughout my life and you know, after college, things like that.



He also discussed how the program emphasized connections and the broad possibilities of the degree.

I can see where they they try to help us with that where in the the PA classes, like the PA 101s, 201s, um they bring in guest speakers and they get to talk about their careers and where they came from and that helps to get a perspective of what this degree is trying to prepare us for. I mean, it isn't one specific thing. It's a multitude of opportunities that we can do. The one constant that they kept reinforcing with us is that the connections that you build with people is the most important thing. It isn't as much how you do, or what you do, as long as you know what you're doing, your connections are the most important thing you develop with people.

For Donald, connections represented a positive result of the Performing Arts in music degree program at Clemson University.

Carter also spoke about the connections developed in the program as both a positive of the degree and as a result. In fact, in a follow up member check, Carter reiterated that "connections are everything" as he talked about a current job opportunity. So, while most of his discussion of connections focused around camaraderie built and developed through performing ensembles and collaborative events and projects, he also recognized how this family network of connections was beneficial to his overall results gained from the program. Carter mentioned this family atmosphere and camaraderie many times throughout the conversation. "I mean of course everyone talks about the Clemson family, and within that, you have your many other families, like Performing Arts family." "Um, well I guess the family aspect really lends itself well to the department because we're such a small program that you can't help but get close to these people." "I mean the department, the program itself just lends itself to, uh family aspect." This

“family aspect” he consistently referenced throughout the interview constituted a network and connection. As “connections are everything,” this network was very much a result of the Performing Arts music program.

In an explicit way, connections developed in the Performing Arts music program at Clemson University were a significant result of the degree for Melissa, Felicity, Donald, and Carter. As detailed earlier, James discussed connections in terms of the music and in a much less direct manner. While certainly to different degrees specific and individual to each of them, for the other four participants, the networks and connections developed were important to their ultimate view of what they received from the program. Based upon their expectations, college choice, pros and cons, and opportunities, these degrees varied. However, in the end, as Carter said, the “connections are everything.”

**Marketability.** Each of the participants discussed the idea of the Performing Arts degree program making them more marketable. While the style and reasons certainly differed, this was a sub-theme that emerged in all of the conversations. This is important as the Production Studies in Performing Arts degree at Clemson University is designed to cover a wide range of artistic skills in music, theatre, and audio technology.

Carter spoke initially of the comprehensive nature of the Performing Arts program. He liked the fact that all of the concentrations worked together in class, on projects, and in performances. In his words:

Well I mean, one that it was in the arts, but also that you weren’t confined to just your concentration, like that you get to do everything, working in theatre, audio, and just getting a feel for everything the performing arts field has to offer. So I like that.

He continued on to discuss some of the experiences detailed earlier in this chapter when describing this program that is “all encompassing.” However, Carter also wanted to have a degree that would position him favorably in the job market. In fact, he nearly majored in Business due to the major’s perceived marketability and utility.

I mean, there were times I just considered being a business major, because you can do anything with that, but I didn’t really have any other ideas, but, um the more I thought about it, the more I realized I just couldn’t do anything that wasn’t related to music or theatre, or anything in the Performing Arts. So, it was essentially my only option I felt like.

However, thanks to the mixing of concentrations and the “all encompassing” nature of the degree program, Carter found this same marketability in the Performing Arts.

Yea. I mean, I loved just finding out what I could cause I figure leaving here, it makes me a little bit more marketable, and I can say, hey I’ve done this and I’ve done that, so I’m not completely ignorant, I know what I’m doing, just not completely.

Put another way, “Um, I mean, I just liked how you were able to get yourself involved in everything in the field” and “But uh, I, I just really liked the fact that you weren’t confined to your specific concentration and that you were allowed to dabble in everything else.” Being involved in all aspects of the arts allowed Carter to see one positive result of the program as him being just “a little bit more marketable.” In the end, “Um, I feel like I’m fairly marketable just from everything I’ve done in this department.”

Donald spoke of marketability from the degree program in a much less explicit manner. For Donald, it was the fact that some experiences in the program opened his eyes up to new possibilities in the arts. Like Carter, Donald also initially considered coursework in business.

But uh, I was entering a performing arts program and I was, me and my parents agreed that I would do a business minor, and so I was thinking, at that point I was thinking maybe I could run a restaurant and I could perform at night or something like that.

So without very clear goals from the outset, “I’m not even sure if I still have long term goals as of today,” these experiences shaped his results from the program by exposing him to new artistic options. In turn, it was these new options and possibilities that then made him more marketable. The experiences gave him marketability. When speaking of these experiences, “And it was a lot, it was a great experience. I really enjoyed that, and it opened up a new door for me of what I think I want to do after I graduate.” Prior to the experience in the program, “I didn’t think that was possible.” To Donald, this experience was a new and exciting possibility. “It was something that was really different.” As someone who came into the Performing Arts program with little plan or a set of goals, the experiences in the degree made him more marketable by giving him a chance to find out “what I want to do.”

James also entered the Performing Arts degree program with little direction. For him, music was never really a serious option because it had never been taken seriously in his high school program. As a result, “I’ll tell you right off the bat I had no idea what I wanted to do with it. Um, I figured I wanted to go into the performance route, but still I had nowhere to go with it.” It was a situation of “Yep, it worked out and it was just a situation with ok, I like this, what do I want to do with this?” However, for James, what he wanted “to do with this” raised an issue.

And, so, now, what I’m trying to do is, once I go back home I’m going to uh, finish taking courses in teaching and then I’m going to apply for graduate school to get my masters and hopefully while getting my masters I’ll be doing some, uh teaching at another school or perhaps doing lessons.

The problem was that given the style of the Performing Arts curriculum, James will be required to continue taking courses at the undergraduate level in order to gain admittance to a traditional music education masters program. “Well, the unfortunate thing is that after I graduate here, I will need to go and take more classes in order to get my teacher license.” He continued to offer the recommendation that,

So, possibly the, in that aspect the uh, program could offer classes that would be geared towards already having those uh pre-requisites in order to get your license. Um, otherwise, it’s different from uh, from university to university for what they require for you to know.

Despite this perceived setback in marketability for music graduate school, James brought up other examples of Performing Arts graduates successfully going on to various graduate schools.

Cause I know, uh, there was one student who already graduated, and uh she was required to take another year, or another semester of theory on top of what they already uh gave her here, and at another school they required her to take like another history class.

So while certainly an obstacle, James did not speak of the issue in negative terms. In fact, when he discussed where these other students eventually attended graduate school, James proudly stated regarding the institutions that “that’s pretty damn good I would say.” In the end, the need to take courses beyond the prescribed Performing Arts music curriculum constituted only a small issue for marketability.

Like Carter and Donald, Melissa also displayed some initial hesitation regarding what to do with a Performing Arts degree. In fact, regarding a conversation with her parents Melissa stated, “but I was like, music, that’s probably not a very lucrative thing, and my parents kind of wanted me to be a doctor or something or a lawyer.” While marketability was not an explicit

part of her narrative, Melissa did talk about the component of the Performing Arts program that was designed to make the degree more marketable. Given her intense high school performing background and her desire for more Classical style performance opportunities at Clemson, Melissa couched the marketability issue in language juxtaposing conservatory style music education and Clemson's liberal arts style music education.

Um, yea, and you know, a little bit, it's not, you don't have a lot of, it kind of comes with the feeling that like well we're not a conservatory, we're you know a liberal arts program, and we're more well-rounded, and I was like, yea ok, cool, I mean, honestly, and I like it cause it's, to a certain point, cause it is more real-world.

This "real-world" experience that she liked was a key element of the Performing Arts degree at Clemson University. So, despite concerns over facilities, faculty, rigor, and performing opportunities, Melissa openly acknowledged the real-world experiences that are of paramount importance to this liberal arts Performing Arts music degree. As this "real-world" experience is crucial in the marketing of the degree program, for Melissa it is a secondary way to concede the degree has made her more marketable as a graduate. In fact, as a result of this marketability and "real-world" experience, despite all of her concerns, Melissa's larger view of the results of the program were positive and are detailed in the following section of this chapter.

Of all of the participants, Felicity spoke most passionately and most explicitly about how the Clemson University Performing Arts music program made her more marketable. For Felicity, the liberal arts style of education gave her more "options" after graduation and this served as a catalyst for choosing the major and the University. Referring to the more traditional model of music in higher education, she stated that:

I don't really want to go into the performance aspect with the Bachelor of Arts, you have so many other options, so many other doors, but with a Bachelor of Music, sometimes it can be limiting if you change your mind about that music career, you have to like really want it, and um, and I just wasn't sure at that point in my life if music was going to be my world for the rest of my life.

At this point in her life, her career direction she was looking towards still utilizing the arts, but "is a lot different than I was ever anticipating when I was entering college." However, while different, the program was partly chosen due to the wide range of opportunities and experiences that made her more marketable to a wider range of constituencies. "And also, just kind of gives me a more diverse background and it makes me that much more marketable, um upon graduation."

While all of the participants spoke throughout their conversations of limitations built into the major and discussed concerns over a range of issues, in the end they all acknowledged the marketability of the degree. Even though James admitted an issue in the curriculum posed a problem and limited his marketability, he didn't frame it negatively. The following and final sub-theme will discuss how each of them viewed their progress and preparedness as a result of their experiences in the Production Studies in Performing Arts music program.

**Preparedness.** In finale, each of the participants discussed their growth and progress in the degree program. Each of these discussions was highly individualized based upon the major themes that were been elucidated during this chapter. Depending upon their expectations, college choice, perceptions, and opportunities, the way they each viewed their own personal preparedness differed.

With regards to being prepared through the degree program, Felicity used many salient phrases. Firstly, through music in general she stated that “Um, music you’re constantly put in front of people and have to perform.” She saw this as a skill that can be seamlessly applied to any career field as essentially, “you’re getting up in front of people and you’re communicating.” This is important given that her current path and plan “is a lot different than I was ever anticipating when I was entering college.” In addition, Felicity believed that her Performing Arts music education had made her into a professional. “I think the performing arts has taught me how to represent myself well and set myself apart.” In addition, while she has no plans to enter a performing field, “I don’t really want to go into the performance aspect,” she has seen marked improvement. “I’ve improved every year and then this past year I’ve made a drastic difference.” While not destined for the performing stage, “these new techniques and abilities with me post-graduation” with “with whatever I do.” Ultimately, for Felicity, “the finesse that the performing arts has taught me” will allow “me to be successful.”

While Carter admitted that due to the style of the program he was “probably not” prepared to be an educator like he originally thought he would be. “Coming into the uh Performing Arts department I’d been considering taking the long, roundabout way to being a band director.” However, his reasoning for not going that route was not related to preparation in the department. He didn’t want to be trapped in a music program where “I wouldn’t have been able to deal with” students that wanted “to complain about everything.” However, “but then again high schoolers complain about everything,” so Carter was more interested in following an arts administration career path than teaching. In this respect his experiences in the program have prepared him for this direction. “Um, so yea, just learning from her everything that’s involved in running a place like this, very beneficial.” He reiterated multiple times, that it was the



experiences that have prepared him for this career path, and not necessarily a set of skills. “Um, I don’t know about skills necessarily, just the experiences themselves.” He elaborated on these experiences that:

Um, I just, all the different experiences I’ve had, from music to theatre, to um working the more administrative side, and plus prior experiences like with my dad, um just learning how offices run period, and just everything I’ve done thus far in my life, I figure caters to a wide range of um options, just working in offices, to working in the arts, to working in food services, I’ve just done a lot of things, so, honed in on a lot of different skills.

Coupled with his personal background, Carter concluded that these experiences have prepared him for a range of options. As a result of this preparation, he felt confidence to apply for a range of jobs including “those I’m not necessarily qualified for.” In the end, the Performing Arts degree prepared him to stay in the arts because, “I mean, I figure I’m the most qualified for that.”

Donald spoke more veiled about his level of preparation from the program, but still far from negative. As he intended to continue in music through graduate school, Donald emphasized that throughout his Senior Recital experiences that:

Yes, I did, I always felt prepared. I, at first the piece looked like it was way too complex for me, and then we broke it down and I worked on it throughout the semester, and then when it came jury time, I was ready, and I played it, and I felt good about it.

With his interest in continuing to perform, this was important to understanding his level of satisfaction with his preparation from the program. While he now understands that music is for him, and that he did not particularly enjoy the theatre or audio technology aspects of the major, he still viewed his experiences with the other concentrations positively.

Well, I feel like I could have done that (Bachelor of Music degree program), looking back and I would have been fine. But coming here helped me know that music really is best for me, and that I don't really want to do the audio or theatre aspects of it.

He continued, "I just realized that I just liked the music part." For Donald, as he embarked on the next segment of his musical development he is "ready to get out of the general performing arts thing. I've I've done it long enough now. I'm ready to focus more on music I think." And ultimately, thanks to the preparation from the Performing Arts music program at Clemson University:

It was it was more to, it was great to get in here and find what I like, because a lot of times, you don't know what you like. I feel like I still don't know what I like, but I'm, I feel like I'm closer to finding that out, probably.

In order to continue on to graduate school, James discussed earlier how he needed to take extra classes to supplement his Performing Arts curriculum. "Well, the unfortunate thing is that after I graduate here, I will need to go and take more classes in order to get my teacher license." However, as detailed earlier, he did not view this as a limitation. In fact, James was clear that despite the need for these extra classes, he felt thoroughly prepared by his Performing Arts education. Starting with some initial trepidation regarding his readiness to move on to graduate school he responds, "I think so" to whether he felt prepared. However, this developed into more confident language as he discussed his own performing ability and preparation. Here he demonstrated his level of comfort with his development as a performer.

Uh, that was my major thing, uh, I felt last year I was not ready as a performer to move on, so I had not applied to uh, universities yet, because I would also most likely have to uh audition.

However, with regards to his readiness for graduate school and his level of preparation as a performer, James concluded, “And so now I feel more that I’m more than well-prepared for that.”

Throughout the conversation, Melissa was one of the more outspoken participants with regard to her level of displeasure with a variety of aspects of the Department. As discussed throughout this chapter, these issues included faculty relationships, performing outlets, Classical style techniques and opportunities, and facilities. In terms of preparation on her primary musical skill, she adamantly maintained this critical stance. In terms of performance preparation, she stated, “Yea, I just don’t feel prepared.” She continued, “I think I realized that performance alone was not going to be enough.” Lastly, she gave her cold truth that “I would honestly not recommend to come be” a student of her musical trade at Clemson University. However, with this realization that for her no one was getting enough out of performance, “Um, cause you know right now it’s just, no one is getting enough out of it,” her career plan changed. At this point, “I want to go work in arts administration.” “That’s the sort of thing that I want, which, I think this program is good um for that regard, especially cause it’s kind of Production Studies in Performing Arts.” So, while Melissa acknowledged her critiques, she concluded that “No but, I’ve been bitching like this entire time, but I do like it.” And in the end, despite her “bitching,” she did in fact feel prepared for her current plan to go into arts administration. When asked whether she felt prepared for this arts administration path, she responded, “Actually, I think I do.”

While not necessarily what they set out to gain from the program, in specific and individual ways, each of the participants left the program feeling prepared. While full of

critiques and limitations, each participant still saw the Performing Arts program at Clemson University as having prepared them for whatever musical direction they plan on going.

### **Observation and Artifacts**

For this study, the words of the participants taken from in-depth and semi-structured interviews served as the bulk of the data. However, observation and artifact analysis served as an important aspect of data source triangulation. As observation is “one of the key tools for collecting data in qualitative research” (Creswell, 2013, p. 166) this strengthened the study and allowed me to witness the participants in their “usual setting or location” (Lunenberg & Irby, 2008, p. 92). Document analysis was also important to shedding a complete light on the experience of the participants in this study. These documents were analyzed for their “significance” (Lunenberg & Irby, 2008, p. 94) to the participants experiencing the phenomenon. These “program records” (Patton, 2002, p. 4) or “public documents” (Creswell, 2013, p. 160) were essential in corroborating data collected from the interviews.

During this study, observation was used throughout the data collection phase to more clearly elucidate the experiences of senior Performing Arts music students at Clemson University. Given my insider status as a faculty member with the Department of Performing Arts at Clemson University, access was never an issue. I was also able to comfortably navigate the surroundings without drawing attention to myself, the research, or the participants. These observations enabled me to witness the participants in their natural environment in both the Brooks Center and the Department of Performing Arts. During these observations, notes were taken throughout their performances in order to add meaning to the experience for me. During the multiple performances observed, many of the stories told in the interviews came to life. I was able to witness the performing techniques various participants discussed, see the

collaborative experience come to life, and observe the participants being Performing Arts music majors. Unfortunately, specifics of the performances witnessed would make the participants readily identifiable, and therefore compromise their anonymity. However, these observations and field notes collected provide an important avenue to participant rapport and a necessary means of data source triangulation (Glesne, 2011; Patton, 2002). Both of these contributed to strengthening the overall validity of the study.

In addition to observation, analysis of salient artifacts was also important to completing a picture of the experience of being a senior music concentration Performing Arts major at Clemson University. For this study of the experiences of the participants in the degree, the artifacts came in the form of concert and recital programs. Analyzing these documents breathed life into the stories told by the participants and gave meaning to their words. For instance, while Carter spoke little of his upcoming senior recital, he voluntarily and excitedly gave me a copy of the program. As a result, a collaborative opportunity that went largely unmentioned was given much more relevancy. By having access to and then analyzing these program artifacts, the performance experiences being viewed or discussed in the interviews gained more legitimacy.

## **Summary**

This chapter told the stories of each of the participant's experiences with the Production Studies in Performing Arts music concentration at Clemson University. While all of the stories included different backgrounds, skills, and difficulties, they each followed a broad thematic outline. For the participants, their larger views of the experiences in the program were initially shaped by their original expectations of the program. These included musical styles, musical backgrounds, and their own family traditions. Related to this was reasoning for their college choice. Based upon their expectations and reasons for choosing the Department, the University,

and the major, each participant developed a list of perceived pros and cons of the major. These, in turn, affected the opportunities they took advantage of and were important enough to be brought up. In the end, all of these thematic elements fed into their larger view of the results from the program in terms of connections, marketability, and preparedness.

The concluding chapter will summarize this study, discuss the relevant findings from the data with regards to the literature, make recommendations for practice at the Department level, and recommend future research.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

The goal of this phenomenological research study was to describe the lived experience of five seniors in the Clemson University Production Studies in Performing Arts music concentration major. In order to illuminate this experience, in-depth interviews were used as the primary data source. In addition, documents provided by the participants and notes from their performances were used to triangulate the data sources. Throughout the interviews, we discussed the musical backgrounds of the participant, what brought them to Clemson University, what brought them to the major, important experiences in the major, and what they planned to do after graduation.

The beginning chapter of this report included an overview of the study, the research questions, the theoretical framework, the research method to be used, the researcher's perspective, and the significance of the study. In Chapter Two, the literature was reviewed concerning the historical background of music in higher education, the traditional models of music education in the academy, and the emerging Performing Arts degree. Chapter Three detailed the phenomenological method to be used, the process for identifying and interviewing participants, and the procedure for collecting and analyzing data. In Chapter Four, the process for data coding was described and the themes that emerged were discussed.

This final chapter will discuss the findings of the study. It will begin with a brief description of the data display used to portray the themes that explained the experience of the participants in the program. The chapter will then discuss the themes and sub-themes in regards to their relationship with existing music and performing arts literature. The chapter will then conclude with relevant recommendations for practice and recommendations for future research.

## **Discussion of the Findings**

This entire study was oriented around one central research question: How do senior, undergraduate students in the Clemson University Performing Arts music major describe their lived experiences in the program? In other words, what is “the very nature of the thing” (van Manen, 1990, p. 177). The data collection and analysis uncovered five themes: 1) Expectations, 2) College Choice, 3) “It’s kind of like pros and cons,” 4) Opportunities, and 5) Results. The following two sections discuss these themes and their sub-themes. In the first section, the data display representing the Performing Arts music experience for these students will be discussed. Next, findings in the themes and sub-themes that emerged in the study will be discussed in relation to any existing literature.

### **Data Display for the Performing Arts Experience**

The data display representing the Performing Arts music experience for these five participants is presented in Figure 5.1. For the participants, their lived experience in the Clemson University Department of Performing Arts program began with their initial expectations and their reasons for their ultimate college choice. Based on the sub-themes that emerged in the coding process, these two thematic areas are closely related. For some respondents, expectations fueled their college choice and for others their college choice fueled their expectations. Either way, despite sub-theme similarities, these emerged as two distinct thematic areas. However, both combined as a link to the next major thematic area. Based upon their initial expectations and reasons for choosing Clemson University and the major, each participant developed what they each saw as positives and negatives of the degree program, or “It’s kind of like pros and cons.” Sub-themes in the pros and cons theme were facilities, connections, faculty experiences, opportunities, and rigor. This pros and cons theme colored the



way that each of the participants viewed the collaborative opportunities that participants felt had been afforded them. The opportunities theme was comprised of sub-themes about the senior project, senior recital, and the diverse coursework. Finally, the expectations, college choices, pros and cons, and opportunities, all funneled into each participant's views of the results of the program. Results sub-themes were connections, marketability, and preparedness, and they relate directly in the data to expectations and college choice reasons, which affected what they saw as positives and negatives of the program, and which in turn colored their views of the opportunities in the program.

### **Performing Arts Experience**

In this section, I describe the essence of the phenomenon of the Performing Arts in music degree program at Clemson University through the five essential themes that emerged in the study. In addition, this section offers an interpretation of the meaning of this Performing Arts music experience for the participants. This interpretation of the themes and the experience will be through the lens of any existing literature, limited as it may be. Given this lack of research on the Performing Arts music model, much of this discussion begins the conversation rather than elaborating on an existing discussion.

**Expectations.** An early theme that emerged was the notion of expectations. Each of the participants arrived at the Clemson University Production Studies in Performing Arts music program for different reasons. As a result of their backgrounds, they each had a set of pre-conceived thoughts on what the program was going to be. It was these expectations that informed their larger views of the program and its value. With the exception of James who came

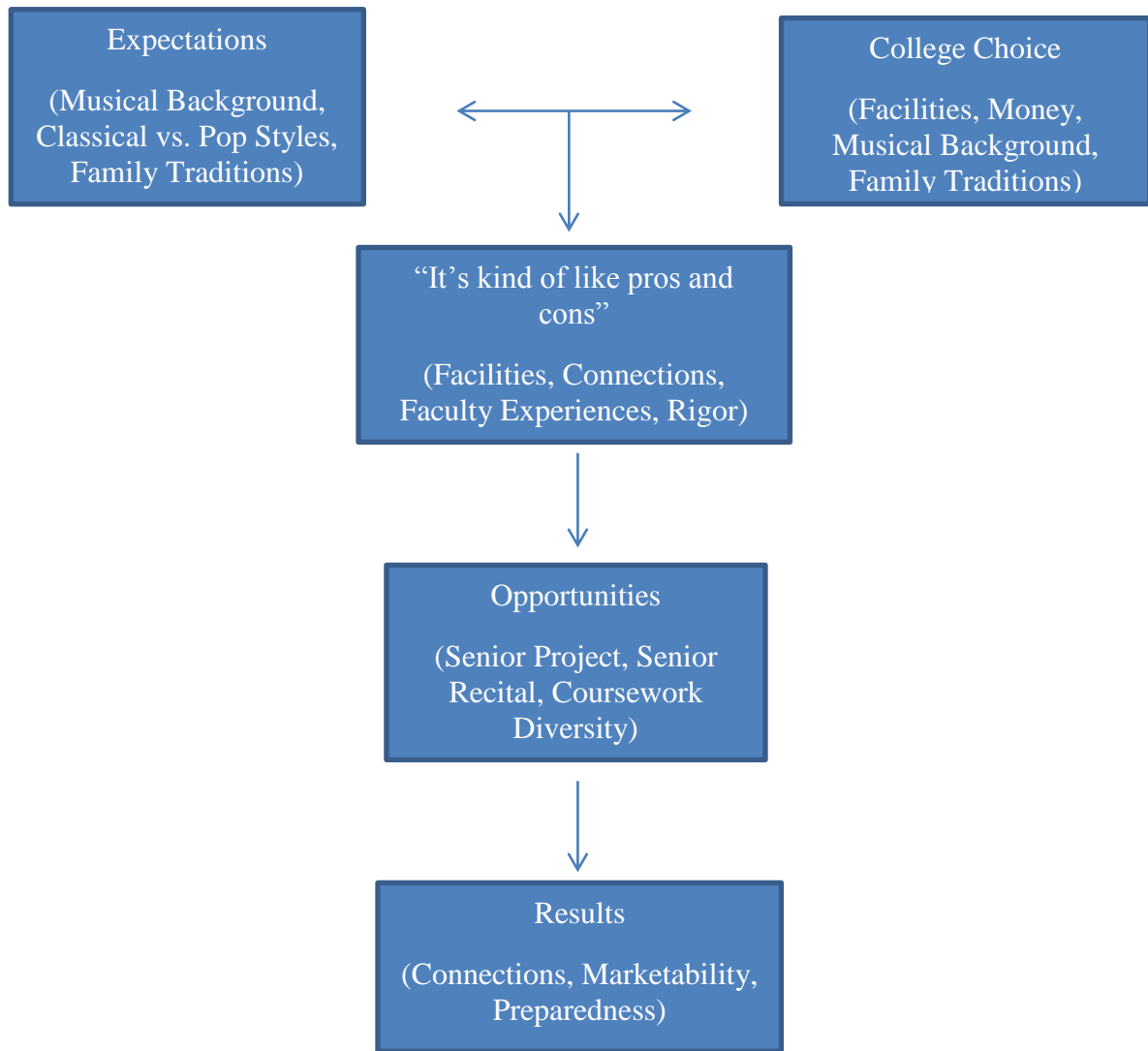


Figure 5.1. Data Display of the Performing Arts Experience of Senior Performing Arts Music Majors at Clemson University

from a high school program that didn't take music very seriously ("in my high school, music, or performing arts wasn't large at all"), the rest of the participants came from more traditional music programs. Their musical backgrounds were full of traditional performances, lesson environments, and even summer camps for Donald. These traditional experiences ultimately gave them an expectation of the same from their chosen college program. Given the lack of

overall research on Performing Arts music programs, it is not surprising that the participants approached the program with more traditional expectations. For these participants, the Performing Arts collaborative model has not yet trickled down into high school programs. The experiences they had were traditional, and the teachers, conductors, and administrators planning those experiences were undoubtedly from traditional programs as well.

As discussed in the Classical vs. Pop Styles sub-theme, Felicity and Melissa in particular were looking to continue this emphasis on traditional Classical styles. While they each interpreted these sub-themes differently, they both focused on this issue. Felicity stated that, “So I wanted that Classical chamber kind of experience, and some contemporary, but, so they don’t offer what I want.” Melissa echoed this idea and added, “here, my want and need to do Classical has um diminished since then, because there’s not really a forum to do it.” However, this switch from traditional Western styles to more modern performance and course offerings is consistent with the goals of performing arts programs. A limitation of the traditional model of music higher education was a narrow focus on Western music traditions (Belz, 2006; Jorgensen, 2003). A side effect of this narrow focus is the exclusion of world music, modern performance techniques, and indigenous music. It is therefore the intent of performing arts programs to eliminate this limitation by offering more of these non-traditional offerings. Donald also lamented the lack of more traditional music theory offerings in the Department when he stated that, “I wish I could have gone further in it because I really liked it. But then, we only had our two semesters and we were done.” As a result, the finding that the Department of Performing Arts has limited more traditional performance and classroom opportunities in favor of more contemporary styles is consistent with the goal of performing arts programs to provide “music

for all” (Clayton, 2001, p. 6) in their attempt for more “curricular legitimacy” (Johnson, 2004, p. 117).

The Clemson family tradition also emerged as an interesting finding within the expectations theme. All of the participants engaged in the family atmosphere promoted by the University in some manner. Even James eventually experienced the pull of the Clemson tradition once on campus. This is further illustrated by the fact that James and Carter chose Clemson University without even having the Performing Arts degree program in mind. While certainly Clemson University specific, it is a finding that could hold relevance for future program development and research.

**College Choice.** For each of the participants, the reason for choosing Clemson University and therefore, the Performing Arts music major, was a combination of factors. This ultimate decision was the result of the facilities, monetary concerns, family traditions, and the participants’ musical backgrounds. While in different combinations for each participant, and certainly weighted differently, these factors ultimately guided their reasoning for attending Clemson.

The musical backgrounds of the participants did play a role in determining where they would attend college. While these backgrounds at times were in conflict with the modernized nature of the Performing Arts program, for some participants, this served as a positive determining factor. Carter, in particular, came from a high school program where he was able to participate in a wide range of arts activities. As a result, the Clemson Performing Arts music program was ideal for him. Based upon his musical background, Clemson was a place that would enable him to continue to “do it all.”

Family traditions also played a heavy role in helping the participants make their college decisions. Carter best demonstrated this importance when he said that he basically didn't want to be the "black sheep" of the family by not coming to Clemson. This pressure from family was also important to Melissa as "and you know like a lot of my family went here, and so, you know everybody was like, oh yea, Clemson, go to Clemson, go tigers."

Money also informed this decision process. James was concerned about scholarship opportunities, Donald and Felicity limited their search to in-state schools for financial reasons, and Melissa succinctly put it that it "basically boils down to money, it all boils down to money." While not mentioned explicitly, Carter does mention that his search was quite limited and that he was basically coming to Clemson all along. This finding is consistent with the performing arts literature that focuses strictly on financial concerns of the students (Barr, 2004). However, most of that literature focuses financial concerns relative to Performing Arts degree programs in theatre. Therefore, this study extends that body of literature by adding financial concerns for the participants in Performing Arts music degree programs.

For the participants, the findings from this study paint a picture of students that chose the Performing Arts music major at Clemson University for a variety of important reasons. With so little available research on Performing Arts music degree programs and college choice, this study extends some earlier theatre work to music and begins an important conversation concerning music in these programs.

**"It's kind of like pros and cons."** The title for this thematic area was given by Melissa in reference to positives and negatives about the Performing Arts music program. Not surprisingly, each participant expressed things that they liked, enjoyed, and thought were helpful to their development. However, they each voluntarily brought up what they each saw as

limitations to the program, or cons. As a qualitative study that was not guided by theory, the purpose was to shed light on the experience of being in the program (Glesne, 2011). This, coupled with an overall lack of literature on Performing Arts music programs, leaves little to compare these pros and cons to.

One important finding from this thematic area was that facilities are important. In addition to being a determining factor in the college choice experience for Felicity, facilities were important to her Clemson experience as well. Melissa stated that “we just don’t have enough room to do much of anything, and I wish we did.” While in a much less serious manner, Donald echoed the problem when he joked that, “maybe one day you’ll have your own office.” Even Carter, in an overall optimistic and enthusiastic interview conceded when discussing growth and development of the program that, “at this point I don’t think it’s possible just because we don’t have the space.” Given the importance prescribed by the participants to the facilities, it is not surprising that while little literature exists on the Performing Arts music major, work has been done examining degree programs in terms of the economics of facilities (von Szeliski, 2008; Zausch, 1996).

Another finding in the pros and cons section of this study was the attitudes about connections. All of the participants spoke positively of connections made in the program. Whether with fellow students, faculty, staff, administration, or even guest artists, connections developed as a result of the program were important to all of the participants. As a degree program that seeks to be collaborative in nature and to practically prepare students for lives in the arts, the fact that each participant developed meaningful connections was a positive finding for the program. Donald clearly articulated these connections when he said, “but I did develop good relationships with some of the faculty here, and I feel like those relationships can grow and

continue throughout my life and you know, after college, things like that.” So whether friends in performing ensembles for Carter and Felicity, faculty for Donald and James, or guest artists with Melissa, these connections were an essential part of the Performing Arts music experience at Clemson University.

Attitudes about faculty relationships were mixed. Carter and James spoke positively about the music faculty at Clemson University. James consistently and diligently recalled anecdotes from his major professor and Carter spoke of the faculty as being “like parents-ish.” However, others painted a distinctly different picture. Melissa, Felicity, and Donald each had negative faculty experiences that darkened their Performing Arts music experience. Melissa and Felicity, in particular, told separate stories of intimidating and “harsh” classroom experiences with faculty who weren’t willing to help. While their stories did address enjoyable relationships with specific faculty, staff, and administrators, they both told stories that portrayed a faculty that was out of touch with student needs. Felicity went as far as to mention faculty members that had not bought into the Performing Arts model. “I don’t feel like they represent performing arts well, I don’t feel like they are an asset to our major.” Melissa agreed when she noted “professors not being, I guess not being on top of what their students need.” These observations about disengaged faculty that create a negative classroom atmosphere without a focus on student development paints a frightening picture for the program. As an “academic stepchild” (Valentine, 1946, p. 34) of the American academy that is still struggling for “curricular legitimacy” (Johnson, 2004, p. 117), the Performing Arts music degree program is an attempt to legitimize an academic musical paradigm that has “not improved” (Colwell, 2000a, p. 2) since its Middle Ages beginnings. Fighting against the stigma that music programs do not have “any useful application in the real world” (Robinson, 2009, p. 1) is difficult enough without being

undermined by the very faculty in the programs attempting to solve the problem. By providing a unique set of skills such as critical thinking, listening, collaboration, and decision making, music is an important and necessary part of the American higher education academy (Crutcher, 2004). Isolated or not, a lack of faculty buy-in could be paralyzing to the Performing Arts musical movement, and as a discipline that is constantly having defend itself, could ultimately destroy music's centuries old place in higher education.

**Opportunities.** For a degree program based upon collaborative experiences, the opportunities mentioned during conversations with the participants were of particular importance. The senior recital, senior project, and coursework diversity were identified as salient opportunity sub-themes to the participants. Talking about the senior project, Carter said, "I mean you can't get any more collaborative than it was." James too identified the collaborative nature of the senior project when he said, "I guess that was the, uh, department's attempt of collaborating with your fellow performers." The senior project, however, was seen differently by Melissa, "I, the senior project thing, I don't think is really that beneficial." The senior recital was described as a collaborative opportunity by Donald, Carter, and James, but all in different ways. Whether as a cumulative display of work and progress for Donald, a source of pride and musical accomplishment for James, or almost a final obstacle to traverse prior to graduation for Carter, this senior recital sub-theme represented an aspect of the traditional model of music in higher education. As a hallmark of the performance track in music degree program, the senior recital remains in the Performing Arts program. While perhaps less emphasized, as can be seen by the lack of mention by Felicity and Melissa, it is indicative of the Performing Arts degree program's attempt to utilize the most productive aspects of the traditional model of music in higher education while minimizing the limitations (Clayton, 2001).



For the coursework diversity component of the opportunities theme, each participant saw things differently. Carter loved the “all encompassing” nature of the degree program that included audio technology and theatre courses. Felicity also liked the fact that these collaborative classes in other concentrations helped her to “kind of develop that well-roundedness.” James approached the issue of coursework with greater practicality when he said:

It gives you a base to start on, if you want to understand it, you really need to go upon that yourself and maybe take more classes in there, but in order to understand it really, you need to major in those areas.

Donald, recognized that the coursework diversity was an important component of the Performing Arts model, but ultimately, “So, the things that I like are all in the music area, and the things that I don’t like are all out of the music area.” Melissa found the curriculum that included courses from outside of the music concentration to be “pigeon-hole.”

In the end, the finding regarding the opportunities thematic area was best stated by Felicity. “Um, it’s hit or miss.” Some of the collaborative opportunities that were designed to reduce the limitations of the traditional music tracks of performance and education worked, and some didn’t. Either way, the program is making the effort to include these Performing Arts experiences and advance music in the higher education academy. Given the historical evolution of music in higher education, this finding is a part of the process. The performance/music education track in higher education music worked for a long time until the limitations outgrew the benefits and teachers were no longer being adequately prepared and the market could no longer accommodate the wealth of performers (Lindeman, 1998; Mark, 1996). This “hit or miss” collaborative issue is only part of the journey toward maintaining sustainable and productive higher education music programs.

**Results.** The fear that the traditional music fields of performance and music education did not have “any useful application in the real world,” (Robinson, 2009, p. 1) and the concern that these programs had no practicality or market relevance, was a driving factor in the inception of the Performing Arts degree model (Colwell, 2000b; Robinson, 2009; Walker, 2008). New and emerging programs sought to “provide students with the fundamental tools they need to succeed in the industry as non-players.” (Music Business, 2009, p. 17). With this in mind, a key finding from this study related to marketability and preparedness.

Despite their early expectations of being performers, Melissa and Felicity both ultimately understood that this would not happen. Melissa stated that, “I don’t think most of us are going to come out at least musicians and actually be a performer.” This is echoed by Felicity’s statement that, “I’m going to have to go make my own band in order to be performing,” and “I think that’s really disappointing and we could be doing a lot more with music, that’s what I would say.” While disappointing to them both, the transition to multidisciplinary and collaborative instruction is consistent with the literature. An over-emphasis on solo literature and recitals in traditional programs has been shown to come at the expense of any real musical understanding (Kirchhoff, 1988; Leornard & House, 1972; Reimer, 1989; Swanwick, 1999). The move away from a solo recital/performer emphasis is just another attempt to negate the limiting aspects of the traditional model of music programs in higher education. James, however, understood that in order to pursue a career in music education, he would need to take additional courses not available to him at Clemson in the Performing Arts program. He stated, “well, the unfortunate thing is that after I graduate here, I will need to go and take more classes in order to get my teacher license.”

Despite these limitations and issues, the final finding is that the program worked. Each of the participants spoke of their preparedness, growth, positive connections, and marketability

favorably. For a degree program intent on providing practical musical outcomes designed to mitigate the limiting effects of stagnant performance and education tracks, this is the highest possible compliment. To conclude, each participant discussed their individual growth and marketability upon leaving the Clemson University Production Studies in Performing Arts music major.

Carter stated that:

Yea. I mean, I loved just finding out what I could cause I figure leaving here, it makes me a little bit more marketable, and I can say, hey I've done this and I've done that, so I'm not completely ignorant, I know what I'm doing.

He then added that, "Um, I feel like I'm fairly marketable just from everything I've done in this department."

For Donald, "And it was a lot, it was a great experience. I really enjoyed that, and it opened up a new door for me of what I think I want to do after I graduate." He continued to remark on his level of preparedness that:

It was it was more to, it was great to get in here and find what I like, because a lot of times, you don't know what you like. I feel like I still don't know what I like, but I'm, I feel like I'm closer to finding that out, probably.

When discussing going on to graduate school and continuing his musical growth as a performer, James succinctly stated that, "And so now I feel more that I'm more than well-prepared for that."

With a mixture of harsh criticism and devotion, Felicity spoke eloquently about her level of preparation from the program and subsequent marketability. "And also, just kind of gives me a more diverse background and it makes me that much more marketable, um upon graduation."

As by far the harshest critic of the program throughout the study, Melissa ultimately did recognize that while not prepared as a performer, she was in fact prepared for a career in the arts. In the end, Melissa recognized that the Clemson University program was a Performing Arts degree and not a traditional performance model program. As a result, her plan changed. She intends to pursue arts administration and “I think this program is good um for that regard, especially cause it’s kind of Production Studies in Performing Arts.” So, despite her “bitching” (her words) about the program, she did feel prepared to enter a sustainable career field in the performing arts, which in the end was the point of the degree program all along.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

Based on the findings from this phenomenological research study on the experiences of these senior Performing Arts music students at Clemson University, there are three main recommendations for practice in an attempt to improve the program. As a result of the nature of qualitative and phenomenological research, these recommendations are specific to this program at this institution. However, given the lack of literature on performing arts music programs, these recommendations can be used to begin conversations to improve other such programs and to continue fulfilling the mission of “music for all” (Clayton, 2001, p. 6).

The first recommendation is to continue to clarify the degree program. With little literature on the degree and hardly any history at all, it is important that the faculty, staff, and administration are able to properly define what it is they are doing. What are the learning outcomes from this program? What are the objectives from the core Performing Arts courses? What can you do with this degree? By clearly answering these questions, and continuing to examine the experiences within the program, the degree can continue to grow, develop, and evolve. As the expectations of the participants were so instrumental in forming their larger

views of the degree, clarifying the direction, purpose, and opportunities in the major from the outset could work to improve results throughout their time in the program. In addition, if students are more aware of what the degree is, it eliminates confusion and negativity when unreasonable expectations for a performing arts program (conservatory style performance) go unmet. Also, given the historical tradition of inclusion of music in higher education, it is important to be flexible. While always present and necessary, the role of music has continually changed. It is in this spirit that norms and practices must be challenged, debated, and ultimately clarified. Clinging to archaic music programs in the academy only serves to further isolate music departments from the rest of the academic community and therefore make suspect music's inclusion as a legitimate discipline.

With this clearly articulated mission, message, and plan, it is then essential that everyone get on board. For the second recommendation, it is mandatory that all faculty, staff, and administration buy-into the program. For the time being, it is going to be the case that faculty and staff in Performing Arts music programs are going to largely come from traditional performance or music education programs. However, this is not an excuse to contribute to the stagnation of music in higher education. Everyone involved must be a contributing member in the collaborative performing arts model. The finding from this study that isolated faculty were not engaged in student growth and Performing Arts program development is unacceptable. Felicity's statement about these isolated faculty is deplorable and damaging:

And when they spoke about the performing arts major they were like, "well it's not a Bachelor of Music degree so if you want to do performance, maybe it's not the best school, but you know we have arts administration and all this other experience you can get." And I'm like, come on you're not even like enthused about like what we're doing.

Advocates for and participants in the degree program need to stop apologizing for not being a performance or music education program and embrace a clearly articulated mission for the Performing Arts program. All involved in the Performing Arts movement must drop the “academic stepchild” (Valentine, 1946, p. 34) mentality and laud the program’s possibilities and accomplishments. As turnover inevitably brings in new faculty, staff, and administrators, these hires must be people who believe in the Performing Arts mission and are fully committed.

Lastly, with the clear message and mission and a fully devoted faculty, program development and recruitment become paramount. Use the findings regarding the Clemson family tradition and the importance of money to college choice to the Department’s advantage. Focus recruiting efforts on in-state students and on those with ties to the area and the University. These localized and focused recruiting efforts by dedicated faculty that believe in the program can begin program growth. Melissa said it best, “like there’s not a whole lot of opportunity, but that’s kinda because we don’t have a lot of people.” A clear message and understanding of the degree promoted by a dedicated and devoted faculty plus focused and clear recruiting efforts equals more students. Ultimately, more students equal more opportunities for collaboration, growth, and development and the continuation of music’s proud legacy of inclusion and importance in higher education.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

The findings of this study offer a wealth of opportunities for future research. As an emerging field with little literature, research on the Performing Arts music model must be continued.

Firstly, as a phenomenological study, this research utilized a small number of participants to get at the essence of the Performing Arts music experience at Clemson University for five

seniors. More research of this nature needs to be conducted at Clemson University and at other institutions employing this style of degree. This would continue to inform the conversation in the literature regarding the Performing Arts music experience.

In addition, given the finding of some faculty not being fully devoted or dedicated to the program, further research needs to be conducted regarding the relationship with the program of faculty from traditional programs. Are faculty from traditional performance or education backgrounds reluctant to buy into the new style of program? What is the faculty perspective on the experience in a non-traditional degree program?

Given that Performing Arts degree programs are looking to provide a more marketable and practical experience to students, where are the graduates now? Future research of Performing Arts graduates in arts career fields would begin to shed light on what aspects of the program were useful and which were not. This would greatly inform the decision making process for higher education arts leaders as they develop and grow their programs. In addition, research should be conducted regarding the Performing Arts students that graduated and left the performing arts all together. What caused them to leave the arts? Was preparation and marketability an issue? Did the collaborative nature of the program prepare them for careers outside of the arts as well?

With so little available research and literature available on the music component of the Performing Arts major, there is much work to be done. Continued and sustained efforts in this field will contribute to strengthening music's role in the academy and therefore increase music's contributions to both higher education and society. This research to explore the degree is needed to fully understand the program, codify its meaning and relevance, and improve the higher education academy.

## Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to illuminate the experiences of these five students in the Clemson University Production Studies in Performing Arts music degree program. As a result, only one research question guided this study: How do senior, undergraduate students in the Clemson University Performing Arts music major describe their lived experiences in the program? In order to get at this essence, a phenomenological methodology was utilized with in-depth interviews providing the bulk of the data. From the data analysis and coding process, the themes of expectations, college choice, “it’s kind of like pros and cons,” opportunities, and results emerged. For each participant, the expectations going into the program and their reasons for choosing the Clemson University program informed what they each saw as pros and cons. In turn, these views affected their understanding of the collaborative opportunities in the program, which lastly colored their take on the results for the Performing Arts degree program. Despite a multitude of cons, issues, and limitations scattered throughout the stories, all of the participants left the program feeling prepared for a future in the arts and intend to stay there. So while there is certainly room for growth and are a number of findings that indicate intolerably detrimental issues, in the end, Carter summed it up when he indicated he was prepared by the program to “just put me anywhere in the performing arts period, and I’ll be perfectly happy. That’s all I need.” However, Melissa said it best about the program and the future for Performing Arts style degrees in higher education. “Yea, yea well it is uh, it has room for improvement.” You have to start somewhere.



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